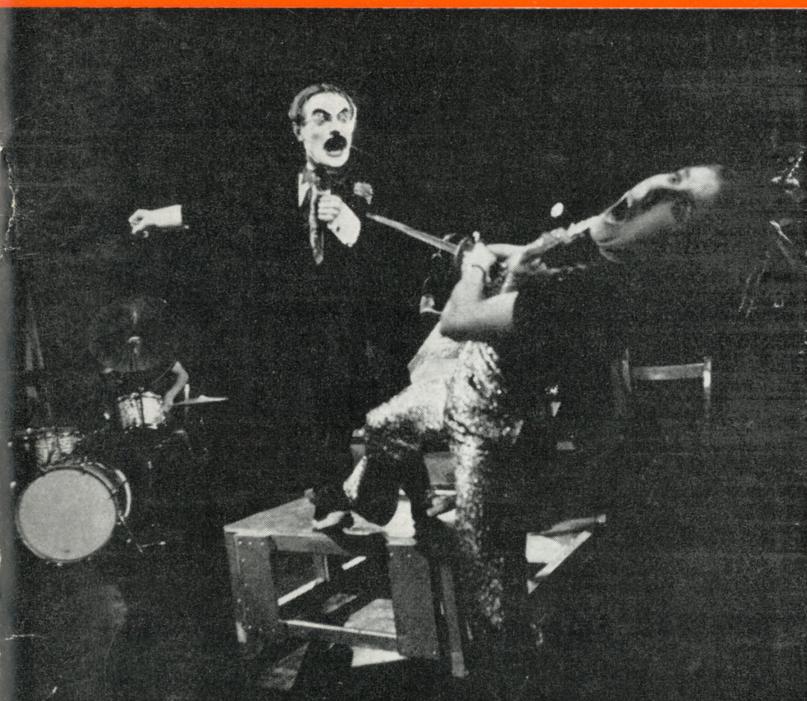


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plays and players

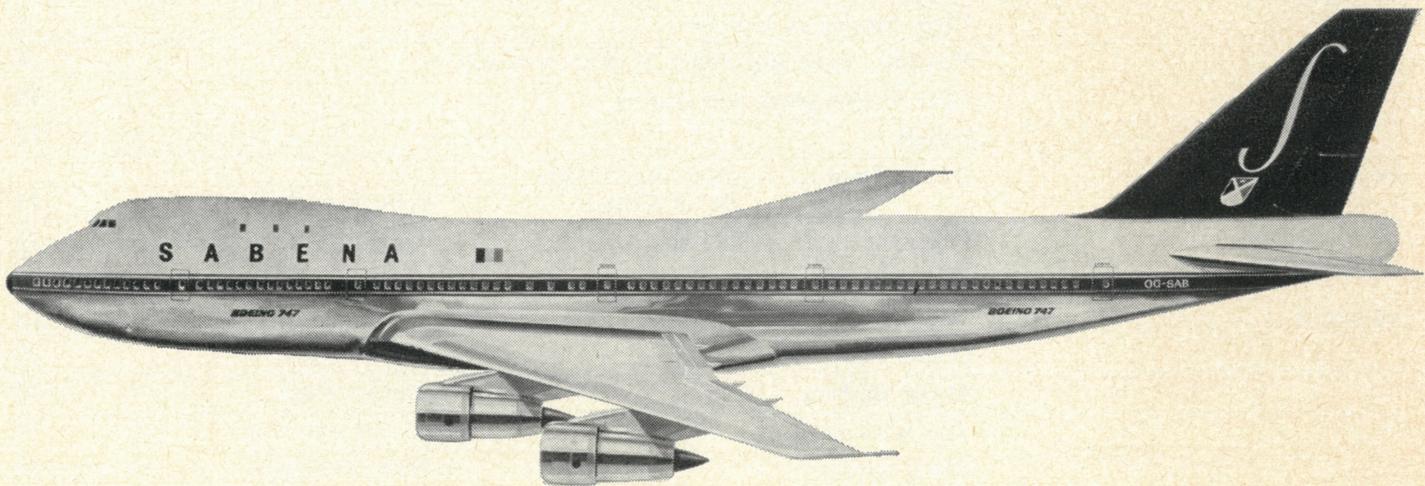
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EDITED BY PETER ROBERTS

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PLAYGUIDE

RECOMMENDED

Play: How the Other Half Loves
Revival: London Assurance
American Musical: Fiddler on the Roof
British Musical: Canterbury Tales
Whodunnit: Sleuth

TEN AT THE TOP

Longest runs in London on December 1

The Mousetrap	...	...	...	...	...	7,483
Charlie Girl	...	...	...	...	...	2,071
There's a Girl in my Soup	...	...	...	...	...	1,863
Fiddler on the Roof	...	...	...	...	...	1,591
Canterbury Tales	...	...	...	...	...	1,126
Hair	...	...	...	...	...	907
The Secretary Bird	...	...	...	...	...	837
Conduct Unbecoming	...	...	...	...	...	586
Pyjama Tops	...	...	...	...	...	490
Promises, Promises	...	...	...	...	...	485

THEATRES

ADELPHI Charlie Girl
ALDWYCH Royal Shakespeare Company: London Assurance; Major Barbara; The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising; Twelfth Night; The Winter's Tale
AMBASSADORS The Mousetrap
APOLLO Butterflies Are Free
CAMBRIDGE National Theatre season: The Beaux' Stratagem; Cyrano; The National Health
COMEDY There's a Girl in my Soup
CRITERION The Wild Duck
DRURY LANE The Great Waltz
DUCHESS Tea Party/The Basement
DUKE OF YORK'S Lady Frederick
FORTUNE The Contractor
GARRICK The Two of Us
GLOBE Blithe Spirit
HAMPSTEAD THEATRE CLUB The Disorderly Women (to December 5)
HAYMARKET A Bequest to the Nation
HER MAJESTY'S Fiddler on the Roof
LYRIC How the Other Half Loves
MAY FAIR The Philanthropist
MERMAID Exiles (to December 12)
NEW The Winslow Boy
OLD VIC National Theatre Company: Hedda Gabler; Home and Beauty; Merchant of Venice; The White Devil
OPEN SPACE Palach (to December 12)
PALACE Danny La Rue at the Palace
PHOENIX Canterbury Tales
PICCADILLY Vivat! Vivat Regina!
PRINCE OF WALES' Promises, Promises
QUEEN'S Conduct Unbecoming
ROUNDHOUSE Royal Shakespeare Company Theatregoround Festival (to December 12)
ROYAL COURT AC/DC (till Nov. 28). Lulu (opens Dec. 8)
ROYALTY Oh! Calcutta!
ST MARTIN'S Sleuth
SAVOY The Secretary Bird
SHAFTESBURY Hair
STRAND When We Are Married
VAUDEVILLE The Jockey Club Stakes
VICTORIA PALACE Magic of the Minstrels
WESTMINSTER The Forgotten Factor; Blindsight (to November 28). Give a Dog a Bone (opens December 10)
WHITEHALL Pyjama Tops
WYNDHAM'S Abelard and Heloise
YOUNG VIC Oedipus; Taming of the Shrew; Timesneeze; Waiting for Godot; Wakefield Nativity

FIRST NIGHTS

November 24—Voyage Around My Father

The Old Vic, Waterloo Road, SE1. 928 7755

John Mortimer's award-winning television play, adapted for the theatre by the author, gets its first stage performance at Greenwich. This very personal biography of Mortimer père, an eccentric blind barrister, will be directed by Claude Watham.

December 1—The Wakefield Nativity

The Young Vic, The Cut, Waterloo, SE1. 928 7616

A group of plays taken from the medieval Wakefield Mystery Cycle which were originally written to be performed in the streets. The Cycle tells the whole story of the bible up to the Ascension of Christ, and The Wakefield Nativity is the first part, dealing with the Nativity of Jesus. The second part, covering the events which led up to the Crucifixion, will be presented before Easter. Peter James directs, and the designer is Carl Toms.

December 8—Lulu

The Royal Court, Sloane Square, SW1. 730 1745

The Nottingham Playhouse production of Wedekind's two Lulu plays: *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*, adapted by Peter Barnes and directed by Barnes and Stuart Burge. Julia Foster is Lulu, with Michael Byrne as Schwarz, Sheila Ballantine as Countess Geshwitz, Tenniel Evans as Casti-Piani and Jack Allen as Schon.

December 21—The King Stag

The Young Vic, The Cut, Waterloo, SE1. 928 7616

The company's first production specially for children in Carlo Gozzi's 18th century Italian magical fantasy, incorporating many such Commedia dell'Arte characters as Pantalone, Truffaldino and Smeraldina. Casting to be announced.

December 21—Tonight at 8

Hampstead Theatre Club, Swiss Cottage Centre, NW3. 722 9301

Three Noel Coward one-act plays with music—*Family Album*, *We Were Dancing* and *Red Peppers* form this triple bill, which Gillian Lynne directs. Designer: John Halle.

December 21—Peer Gynt

69 Theatre Company, University Theatre, Manchester. 061 273 5696

Tom Courtenay plays the demanding title role in Michael Meyer's translation of this great Ibsen epic, which Michael Elliott directs. Designs are by Richard Negri, lighting by John B Read and movement by Litz Pisk.

December 29—Mrs Warren's Profession

The Old Vic, Waterloo Road, SE1. 928 7616

Coral Browne and Sarah Badel both make their National Theatre debut in Shaw's once-banned play about prostitution, appearing as Mrs Warren and her daughter, Vivie, respectively. In Ronald Eyre's production, other important parts are played by Paul Curran and Edward Hardwicke. The designer is Alan Tagg.

PLAYS RUNNING

check times with daily press

PLAYS

ABELARD AND HELOISE (*Wyndham's*, 836 3028) Keith Michell and Diana Rigg co-star in Ronald Millar's play about the tragic love story of the 12th century scholar and divine and the 17-year-old convent girl. Robin Phillips is the director. Evs 7.45, mats Thur and Sat 4. Curtain: 10.30.

A BEQUEST TO THE NATION (*Haymarket*, 930 9832) Terence Rattigan's new play about Nelson and Lady Hamilton and their last weeks spent together at Merton. Ian Holm and Zoe Caldwell play the central characters with Leueen McGrath as the unhappy Lady Nelson and Michael Aldridge as Lord Minto. Production by Peter Glenville. Evs 7.45, Sats 5 and 8.15, mat Wed 2.30. Curtain: 10.20.

CONDUCT UNBECOMING (*Queen's*, 734 1166) The Bristol Old Vic production of Barry England's play about two young Army officers in India at the end of the last century, and their differing reactions to the crude rites and rituals of 'The Regiment'. Val May directs. Evs 7.45, mats Wed and Sat 4. Curtain: 11.

THE CONTRACTOR (*Fortune* 836 2238) Lindsay Anderson's highly praised Royal Court production of the play by David Storey in which a wedding marquee is constructed and dismantled on-stage. Bill Owen and T P McKenna repeat their performances as the contractor of the title and one of his 'hands'. Evs 8, mat Sat 3. Curtain: 10.30.

CYRANO (*Cambridge*, 836 6056) National Theatre season. Rostand's romantic French classic, in a new adaptation by Patrick Garland, who also directs. Edward Woodward plays Cyrano with Anna Carteret as Roxane and James Fagan as Christian. In repertoire. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30.

THE DISORDERLY WOMEN (*Hampstead Theatre Club*, 722 9301) John Bowen directs this production of his own play—a modern treatment of *The Bacchae*. It reopens the Hampstead theatre after its move to a new and better site in Swiss Cottage (to December 5).

EXILES (*Mermaid*, 248 7656) Harold Pinter directs James Joyce's rarely-performed play, with a cast led by Vivien Merchant, Lynn Farleigh, Timothy West and John Wood. Special 5-week season to December 12. Evs 8.15, mats Thurs & Sat 5.

HEDDA GABLER (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616) Ingmar Bergman's production of Ibsen's great classic, with Maggie Smith as General Gabler's daughter, Robert Stephens as Lovborg, Jeremy Brett as George Tesman and John Moffat as Judge Brack. Translation by Michael Meyer. In repertory. Evs 7.30, mats 2.15. Curtain: 9.50.

LULU (*Royal Court*, 730 1745) The Nottingham Playhouse Company production of Wedekind's *Lulu* plays: *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*, translated by Charlotte Beck and adapted by Peter Barnes, who co-directs with Stuart Burge. Julia Foster plays Lulu with Jack Allen as Schon, Michael Byrne as Schwarz, Frederick Bennett as Schigolch and John Turner as Rodrigo. Limited season from December 8.

PALACH (*Open Space*, 580 4970) Alan Burns and Charles Marowitz have devised this 'theatre-piece' which uses the format of a happening to present a variety of attitudes on the subject of the Czechoslovakia invasion. Directed by Marowitz, designed by Ian Brakewell and Michael Chapman Pincher. Five-week season to December 12.

THE PLEBEIANS REHEARSE THE UPRISING (*RSC, Aldwych*, 836 6404) The play by Gunter Grass set in the Eastern Sector of Berlin in 1953 which deals ironically with the abortive workers' uprising which interrupts rehearsals of Brecht's *Coriolanus* at the Berliner Ensemble. Peggy Ashcroft and Emrys James head the cast, and David Jones directs. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30. In repertoire. Curtain: 10.

RSC THEATREGROUND FESTIVAL (*The Roundhouse*, 267 2564) A six-week programme in which a 50-strong group from the Royal Shakespeare Company present round-the-clock theatre, including a new production of *Arden of Faversham*, John Barton's history cycle *When Thou Art King*, *Dr Faustus*, and *King John*, as well as studio performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III* and *Hamlet*. To December 12.

TEA PARTY/THE BASEMENT (*Duchess*, 836 8243) Donald Pleasence in a Pinter double bill directed by James Hammerstein. Co-starring are Barry Foster and Stephanie Beacham. Evs 8, Fri and Sat 6 and 8.30. Running time: 2½ hours.

VIVAT! VIVAT REGINA! (*Piccadilly*, 437 4506) Robert Bolt's new play about Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I of England—the big success of this year's Chichester Festival. Sarah Miles and Eileen Atkins play Mary and Elizabeth in Peter Dews' production, which is designed by Carl Toms. Evs 8, Sats 2.30 and 8. Curtain: 10.45.

THE WHITE DEVIL (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616) Webster's Jacobean revenge tragedy directed by Frank Dunlop and with lavish sets by the Italian designer Piero Gherardi. Geraldine McEwan plays Vittoria with Edward Woodward as Flamineo. In repertoire. Evs 7.30, mats 2.15. Curtain: 10.30.

THE WILD DUCK (*Criterion*, 930 3216) The Play Company of London's first production is Ibsen's classic in the Max Faber adaptation. Hayley Mills plays Hedwig with Michael Denison as Hjalmar Ekdal, Dulcie Gray as Gina, Alfred Lynch as Gregers Werle, Norman Wooland as Haakon Werle and Paul Hardwick as Dr Relling. Glen Byam Shaw directs and the designer is Motley. Evs 7.45. Sats 4 and 7.45.

THE WINSLOW BOY (*New*, 836 3878) Kenneth More plays Sir Robert Morton KC, in this H M Tennent revival of Terence Rattigan's play about a law suit (concerning a young cadet at Osborne accused of stealing a 5s postal order), which caused a sensation earlier this century. Frith Banbury's production also has in the cast Annette Crosbie, Laurence Naismith, Megs Jenkins and Peter Cellier. Evs 8, Sats 5.40 & 8.40, mats Wed 3.

THE WINTER'S TALE (*Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldwych*, 836 6404) A revival of Trevor Nunn's successful 1969 Stratford production, with Judi Dench doubling the parts of Hermione and Perdita, Barrie Ingham as Leontes, Richard Pasco as Polixenes and Elisabeth Spriggs as Paulina. In repertoire. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30. Curtain: 11.

THE YOUNG VIC (*Young Vic*, 928 7616) This new company, under the wing of the National Theatre, and operating in its own new auditorium in The Cut, caters for the under-25 age group. In the current repertoire are: W B Yeats' translation of the *Oedipus* of Sophocles with Ronald Pickup in the name part; Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*; *The Taming of the Shrew* with Jim Dale and Jane Lapotaire; morning performances of David Campton's play for young children, *Timesneeze* with Bernard Bresslaw; and (from December 1) *The Wakefield Nativity*, a group of plays from the medieval Mystery Cycle.

COMEDIES

THE BEAUX' STRATEGEM (*Cambridge*, 836 6056) National Theatre season. Farquhar's most popular comedy, directed and designed by William Gaskill and Rene Allio, the team responsible for the NT's previous Farquhar success, *The Recruiting Officer*. Maggie Smith plays Mrs Sullen with Robert Stephens as Archer, Ronald Pickup as Aimwell and Sheila Reid as Dorinda. In repertoire, evs 7.30, mats 2.30. Curtain: 10.10.

BLITHE SPIRIT (*Globe*, 437 1592) Beryl Reid, Ursula Howells, Amanda Reiss and Patrick Cargill in Nigel Patrick's new production of Coward's 'improbable farce', first staged in London in 1941. Evs 8. Sats 5.40 & 8.40, mats Wed 2.30. Curtain: 10.30.

● When telephoning from outside London area use prefix 01

BUTTERFLIES ARE FREE (*Apollo*, 437 2663) The Broadway comedy hit by Leonard Gershe with two of its original stars, Keir Dullea and Eileen Heckart, joined by Barbara Ferris. This story of a young man who escapes from a well-to-do overprotective mother to a lower East Side Manhattan apartment is directed by Milton Katselas, responsible for the Broadway production. Evs 8, Thur & Sat 6 & 8.40.

HOME AND BEAUTY (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616) Maugham's marital comedy directed by Frank Dunlop with Geraldine McEwan repeating her performance as Victoria. Robert Lang and Benjamin Whitrow play her two unfortunate husbands and Bernard Bresslaw is A B Raham, their solicitor. Evs 7.30, mats 2.15. In repertoire to December 5. Curtain: 9.50.

HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES (*Lyric*, 437 3686) Robert Morley, Heather Sears and Joan Tetzel in Alan Ayckbourn's hilarious new comedy, directed by Robin Midgley. Evs 8, Sat 5.30 & 8.30, mat Wed 3. Running time: 2½ hours.

THE JOCKEY CLUB STAKES (*Vaudeville*, 836 9988) Alastair Sim stars in William Douglas Home's new comedy, with Robert Coote, Geoffrey Sumner, Julia Lockwood, Ernest Clark and Wensley Pithey. The story is concerned with the trial of a trainer and a jockey by the Jockey Club—the court from which there is no appeal. Evs 8, Sat 5 & 8. Curtain: 10.10.

LADY FREDERICK (*Duke of York's*, 836 5122) Margaret Lockwood and Tony Britton in Maugham's famous comedy set in the South of France in the 1890s. Malcolm Farquhar's production also has Raymond Francis, Ellen Pollock, Heather Chasen and Dermot Walsh in important roles. Evs 8.15, Sats 5.30 & 8.30, mat Wed 2.45. Curtain: 10.35.

LONDON ASSURANCE (*RSC, Aldwych*, 836 6404) Dion Boucicault's hilarious Victorian comedy, not performed in London since 1890, the year of the playwright's death. Donald Sinden, Judi Dench, Barrie Ingham and Elizabeth Spriggs play leading roles in Ronald Eyre's production. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30. In repertoire. Curtain: 10.15.

MAJOR BARBARA (*RSC, Aldwych*, 836 6404) Judi Dench plays Shaw's Salvation Army heroine in this new production directed by Clifford Williams. Brewster Mason is Undershaft, Elizabeth Spriggs Lady Britomart and Richard Pasco Adolphus Cusins. In repertoire, evs 7.30, mats 2.30, Curtain: 10.25.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616) Jonathan Miller's late 19th-century production, with Joan Plowright as Portia, Robert Lang as Shylock, Jeremy Brett as Bassanio and Anthony Nicholls as Antonio. Julia Trevelyan Oman is the designer. In repertoire. Evs 7.30, mats 2.15. Curtain: 10.20.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH (*Cambridge*, 836 6056) National Theatre season. Peter Nichols' award-winning play, a brilliantly ruthless yet stincingly funny observation of life in a hospital ward. Michael Blakemore's production has important roles played by Anna Carteret, Paul Curran, Jim Dale, Gerald James, Charles Kay and Kenneth Mackintosh. In repertoire, evs 7.30, mats 2.30. Curtain: 10.10.

THE PHILANTHROPIST (*May Fair*, 629 3036) A new play by Christopher Hampton, the Royal Court's resident dramatist, set in an English university town in the near future. The central character, a young don, is played by Alec McCowen. Charles Gray and Jane Asher play opposite him, and Robert Kidd is the director. Evs 8.15. Sat 6.15 & 8.45. Running time: 2½ hours. Transferred from the Royal Court.

PYJAMA TOPS (*Whitehall*, 930 6692) Paul Raymond presents an American comedy based on a French one—*Moumou*. A £10,500 glass swimming pool is a highlight of the production. Mon to Thur 8.30, Fri & Sat 7.30 & 10. Running time: 2 hours.

THE SECRETARY BIRD (*Savoy*, 836 8888) Jeremy Hawk plays the successful middle-aged novelist in William Douglas Home's domestic comedy, with Jane Downs as his young wife and Terence Longdon as the philandering stockbroker who tries to break up the marriage. Evs 8, mats Wed 2.30 & Sat 5. Curtain: 10.15.

THERE'S A GIRL IN MY SOUP (*Comedy*, 930 2578) Terence Frisby's long-running comedy about a fortyish food journalist (now played by Charles Tingwell) and his affair with a jet-propelled girlfriend (Karen Kessey). Mon-Fri 8.15, Sats 6 and 8.40, mats Wed 2.30. Running time: 2½ hours.

TWELFTH NIGHT (*RSC, Aldwych*, 836 6404) John Barton's 1969 Stratford production, with Judi Dench as Viola, Barrie Ingham as Sir Andrew, Donald Sinden as Malvolio and Emrys James as Feste. In repertoire, evs 7.30, mats 2.30. Curtain: 10.35. **THE TWO OF US** (*Garrick*, 836 4601) Lynn Redgrave and Richard Briers in a new entertainment by Michael Frayn, made up of four comedies in which the two stars play eleven roles between them. The show is directed by Mark Cullingham. Evs 8.15, Sats 6 & 8.40. Running time: 2 hours 10 mins.

WHEN WE ARE MARRIED (*Strand*, 836 2660) J B Priestley's famous comedy of the three respectable middle-aged couples whose joint anniversary celebration is marred by news that their weddings may not have been legally binding. Peggy Mount and Hugh Lloyd, Freda Jackson and William More, Gwen Cherrell and Frank Thornton are the couples, and Fred Emney the photographer. Robert Chetwyn directs the production which was originally presented at the Yvonne Arnaud, Guildford.

THRILLERS

THE MOUSETRAP (*Ambassadors*, 836 1171) Agatha Christie's whodunnit—London's longest running production now in its 18th year. Evs 8, mats Tues 2.45, Sats 5. Curtain: 10.20.

SLEUTH (*St Martin's*, 836 1443) Paul Rogers and Donal Donnelly now play the leads in Anthony Shaffer's ingenious and witty suspense play. Clifford Williams is the director. Evs 8, Sat 5 & 8.30, mats Wed 2.45. Running time: 2½ hours.

MUSICALS

CANTERBURY TALES (*Phoenix*, 836 8611) Nevill Coghill's version of Chaucer's Tales, now in its 3rd year. Cast includes Jessie Evans, Jack Haig and Kenneth J Warren. Mon-Thur 8, Fri & Sat 5.15 & 8.30. Running time: 2 hrs 45 mins.

CHARLIE GIRL (*Adelphi*, 836 7611) Anna Neagle with Patricia Burke and Derek Nimmo in Hugh and Margaret Williams' comedy musical now in its 5th year. Evs 7.30, Sat 5.30 and 8.30, Thurs 3 & 7.30. Running time: 2¾ hrs.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF (*Her Majesty's*, 930 6606) Successful American musical, now in its fourth year in London. The role of Tevye, the milkman, is played by Alfie Bass, with Avis Bunnage as Golde. Director and choreographer: Jerome Robbins. Evs 7.30, Wed & Sat 2.30. Curtain: 10.15.

THE GREAT WALTZ (*Drury Lane*, 836 8108) A new and lavish American musical set in Vienna in 1840 and based on the music of Johann Strauss, father and son. Heading an international cast are Sari Barabas, Walter Cassel, Leo Fuchs and Diane Todd. Wendy Toye directs. Evs 7.30, mats Wed & Sat 2.30. Curtain: 10.20.

HAIR (*Shaftesbury*, 836 6596) The American 'tribal love-rock' musical directed by Tom O'Horgan, the man responsible for the original production. The company is a London-recruited one led by Joyce Rae, Paul Nicholas and Gary Hamilton. Evs 8, Fri and Sat 5.30 and 8.40. Running time: 2 hrs 35 mins.

PROMISES, PROMISES (*Prince of Wales*, 930 8681) The Neil Simon-Burt Bacharach Broadway musical based on the film *The Apartment*. The largely American cast is headed by Bob Sherman and Betty Buckley. Evs 8, Wed & Sat 5.30 & 8.40. Running time: 2 hrs. 40 mins.

REVUE, VARIETY, ETC

AT THE PALACE (*Palace*, 437 6834) Danny La Rue stars in a new spectacular revue also featuring Roy Hudd, Toni Palmer, David Ellen and Jackie Sands. Presented by Bernard Delfont and Emile Littler. Mon-Thur 8, Fri & Sat 5.30 and 8.30. Running time: 2½ hrs.

MAGIC OF THE MINSTRELS (*Victoria Palace*, 834 1317) The Black and White Minstrels in a spectacular new production. Twice nightly at 6.15 and 8.45.

OH! CALCUTTA! (*Royalty*, 405 8004) Kenneth Tynan's 'evening of elegant erotica', with contributions from Jules Feiffer, John Lennon, Leonard Melfi, Peter Nichols, Joe Orton, Sam Shepard, among others. Clifford Williams directs. Evs 8, Wed & Sat 6.15 & 9. Running time: 2½ hours.

PLAYBILLS

casts and credits of first nights reviewed this month

Cyrano

By Edmond Rostand, adapted by Patrick Garland. Presented by the National Theatre Company at the Cambridge Theatre on October 27 1970. Directed by Patrick Garland, designed by Carl Toms, lighting by Robert Ornbo, musical arrangements and original music by Marc Wilkinson, fight sequences by William Hobbs.

Cyrano, Edward Woodward; *Le Bret*, Anthony Nicholls; *Roxane*, Anna Carteret; *Christian*, James Fagan; *de Guiche*, Charles Kay; *de Valvert*, Malcolm Reid; *Ragueneau*, Gerald James; *Lise Ragueneau*, Jane Wenham; *Fruit Girl*, Kate Coleridge; *Roxane's Companion*, Gabrielle Laye; *Stage Manager*, Michael Harding; *D'Artagnan*, David Kincaid; *Athos*, John Flint; *Porthos*, Denis Lill; *Aramis*, Paul Voudsen; *Richelieu*, Lewis Jones; *Marquis*, David Howey; *Writer*, Peter Rocca; *Poet*, Tom Dickinson; *Mother Superior*, Jane Wenham; *Sister Marthe*, Rachel Herbert; *Sister Claire*, Norma Streater; *Gascon Drummer*, Laurie Morgan. *Actors of the Commedia dell'Arte, de Guiche's Entourage, Pages, Pastrycooks, Gascons*: Norma Streater, Tom Dickinson, James Hayes, Peter Rocca, Judy Wilson, Willie Jonah, Andrew Dawling, Peter Duncan, Isabelle Lucas, David Henry, Michael Edgar, John Flint, Tom Georgeson, Michael Harding, David Howey, Barry James, Lewis Jones, David Kincaid, Denis Lill, Sean Roantree, Peter Rocca, Howard Southern, Paul Voudsen.

Reviewed by Michael Billington, p 43

Photographed by Thomas Simmons

Down the Arches

By Ewan Hooper, research and additional material by Nick McCarty. Presented by The Greenwich Theatre on October 27 1970. Directed by Ewan Hooper, designed by Sue Plummer, lyrics by Leo Aylen and Ewan Hooper, movement by Annette Battam, music by Annette Battam, Richard Gill and A L Lloyd.

George Walter, Bill Stewart; *Colonel Landmann*, Ralph Watson; *Lil*, Sally Mates; *Dottin*, John Keogh; *Admiral Hardy*, Edward Phillips; *Lady Hardy*, Susan Tracy; *Emma Walter*, Romy Baskerville; *Rev. James Macdonald*, Norman Tyrrell; *Micky*, Derek Griffiths; *Magistrate*, Maurice Walsh; *Hume*, Robert Lister; *Navvy*, Peter Spraggon; *Banker*, Malcolm Ranson.

Reviewed by Michael Billington, p 49

Forward Up Your End

New musical, with book by Kenneth Hill, music by Len Newbery. Presented by Gerry Raffles on behalf of Theatre Workshop at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, on October 8 1970. Directed by Joan Littlewood, music arranged by John Mitchell, choreography by Joanne Steur, cartoons by Larry, costumes by Blake Crozier and Sarah Hodgkinson, lighting by Mark Pritchard.

Alderman Miller, Kent Baker; *Edie Miller*, Jean Boht; *Councillor Flanagan*, Ron Hackett; *Alderman Hammer*, Ken Hill; *The Chief Clerk*, Bill Wallis; *Higgins*, Peter Armitage; *Beryl*, Pam St Clement; *Young*, Tom Cockerell; *The Clerk*, Larry

Dann; *Colonel Spurjumper*, Griffith Davies; *Cynthia Miller*, Trudi van Doorn; *Mile Jan*, Jenny Logan; *The Reverend*, John Ratner. *The Baz*; Jimmie Winston and Cloissa Newcombe.

Reviewed by Robert Cushman, p 47

Lie Down, I Think I Love You

New musical by Ceredig Davies. Presented by Daniel Rees (for Fairlodge Ltd) in association with Stratton Smith Productions Ltd at the Strand on October 14 1970. Directed by Geoffrey Cauley, designed by Hutchinson Scott, lighting by Michael Northen. Musical director, David Cullen, musical arrangements by John Neave and David Cullen, costumes by Rosemary Flegg.

Tom, Ray Brooks; *Anna*, Vanessa Miles; *Paul*, Malcolm Reynolds; *Chris*, Colin Bell; *Peter*, Tim Curry; *Liz*, Lynn Dalby; *Sam*, Ray Davis; *Kate*, Antonia Ellis; *Willow*, Jo Maxwell-Muller; *David*, Joan Meredith; *Bonita*, Bonita Bryg; *Kathy*, Katherine Castle; *Patti*, Patricia Hammond; *Victor Kravchenko*; *Steve*, Peter Laury; *Sue*, Susan Marlys; *Andis*, Andis Merton; *Jerry*, Louanne Richards; *Spence*, Spencer Parker; *Georgie*, Georgina Sibley.

Reviewed by Robert Cushman, p 48

Major Barbara

By Bernard Shaw. Presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych on October 19 1970. Directed by Clifford Williams, designed by Ralph Koltai, costumes in association with Freda Blackwood, lighting by Stewart Leviton. Presented by arrangement with Henry Sherwood Productions Ltd.

Barbara Undersharp, Judi Dench; *Andrew Undersharp*, Brewster Mason; *Lady Britomart*, Elizabeth Spriggs; *Stephen Undersharp*, Roger Rees; *Adolphus Cusins*, Richard Pasco; *Rummy Mitchens*, Anne Dyson; *Snobby Price*, Miles Anderson; *Jenny Hill*, Juliet Aykroyd; *Morrison*, Leonard Fenton; *Sara*'s Undersharp, Lisa Harrow; *Charlie Lomax*, Michael Gambon; *Peter Shirley*, Milton Johns; *Bill Walker*, Don Henderson; *Mrs Baines*, Janet Henfrey; *Bilton*, Leonard Fenton.

Reviewed by Stanley Price, page 32

Photographed by Patrick Eagar

Stuff

A musical enigma featuring *The Scaffold* with Polly James, presented at The Open Space on October 27 1970.

Reviewed by Peter Ansorge, page 48

The Tempest

By William Shakespeare. Presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon on October 15 1970. Directed by John Barton, designed by Christopher Morley with Ann Curtis, songs by Ben Kingsley, lighting by John Bradley.

Prospero, Ian Richardson; *Miranda*, Estelle Kohler; *Ariel*, Ben Kingsley; *Caliban*, Barry Stanton; *Alonso*, Patrick Barr; *Sebastian*, Clement McCallin; *Antonio*, William Russell; *Gonzalo*, Philip Locke; *Ferdinand*, Christopher Gable; *Adrian*, Allan Mitchell; *Francisco*, Peter Harlowe; *Trinculo*, Norman Rodway; *Stephano*, Patrick Stewart; *Master of the Ship*, Hugh Keays Byrne; *Boatswain*, Peter Needham; *Iris*, John York; *Ceres*, Alan Howard; *Juno*, Terence Taplin. *Mariners*: Richard Jones Barry, Martin Bax, Hugh Keays Byrne, Ralph Cotterill, Peter Harlowe, Glynn Lewis, Michael McGovern, Philip Manikum, Allan Mitchell, Peter Needham, Terence Taplin, John York.

Reviewed by Helen Dawson, page 38

Photographed by Zoe Dominic

Vivat! Vivat Regina!

By Robert Bolt. Presented by H M Tennent and John Clements Plays at the Piccadilly on October 8, 1970. Directed by Peter Dews, designed by Carl Toms, lighting by Mick Hughes, music composed and arranged by Richard Kayne. A Chichester Festival Theatre production first seen in Chichester on May 20 1970.

Mary, Queen of Scots, Sarah Miles; *Elizabeth I of England*, Eileen Atkins; *William Cecil*, Richard Pearson; *Claud Nau*, David Bird; *Robert Dudley*, Norman Eshley; *John Knox*, Leonard Maguire; *David Rizzio*, Matthew Guinness; *Lord Bothwell*, David McKail; *Henry Stuart*, Lord Darnley, Cavan Kendall; *de Quadra*, Edward Atienza; *Lord Morton*, Archie Duncan; *Lord Bishop of Durham*, Brian Hawksley; *Sir Francis Walsingham*, Edgar Wreford; *Davison*, Eilian Wyn; *Lord Mor*, Brian Hawksley; *Ruthven*, Glyn Grain; *Lindsey*, Alexander John; *A Doctor*, Ken Grant; *Tala*, Malcolm Rogers; *Ormiston*, Jonathan Mallard; *A Prisoner*, Malcolm Rogers; *Scots Archbishop*, Maurice Jones; *Philip of Spain*, Alastair Meldrum; *The Pope*, Kenneth Caswell; *Brewer*, Adrian Reynolds; *Bagpiper*, Willie Cochrane; *A Cleric*, Kenneth Caswell. *Jailers*, *Couriers*, *Lairds*, *Clerks*, *Servants*, *Court Ladies*, etc.; Adrian Reynolds, Ken Grant, Glyn Grain, Maurice Jones, Alastair Meldrum, Isabel Mettiss, Angela Easton.

Reviewed by John Russell Taylor, p 47

Photographed by John Timbers

The Winslow Boy

By Terence Rattigan. First performance at the New Theatre on November 5 1970. Presented by H M Tennent by arrangement with Arthur Cantor, it was directed by Frith Banbury with a setting by Reece Pemberton, costumes by Beatrice Dawson and lighting by Joe Davis.

Ronnie Winslow, Steven Pacey; *Violet*, Hilda Fennimore; *Grace Winslow*, Megs Jenkins; *Arthur Winslow*, Laurence Naismith; *Catherine Winslow*, Annette Crosbie; *Dickie Winslow*, Peter Gale; *John Watherstone*, Christopher Cazenove; *Desmond Curry*, Peter Cellier; *Miss Barnes*, Rosamund Greenwood; *Fred*, Michael Haughey; *Sir Robert Morton*, Kenneth More.

Reviewed by Hilary Spurling, page 36

Photographed by Angus McBean

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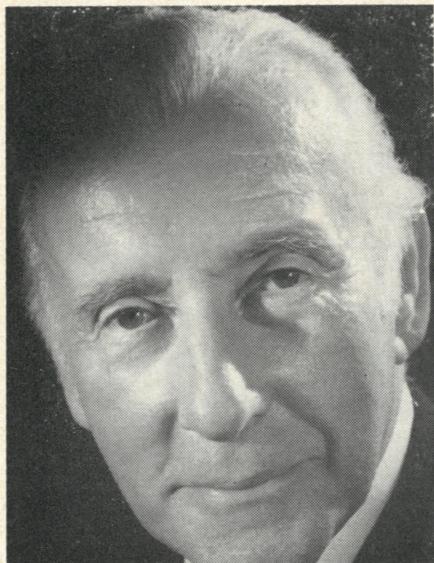
new plays and casting

Jane Howell will be the new Director of the Northcott, Exeter. She will succeed the theatre's founder director, Tony Church, on January 1. Since leaving the Royal Court, where she was assistant to William Gaskill and an Associate Director, she has been working as a free-lance director at Lincoln, Bolton, and Bristol for both the Bristol Old Vic and the University Drama Department.

Tennessee Williams is working on a new play, based on an earlier, unfinished one called *An Occidental Noh Play*. The central characters are an American couple touring Japan, and the play will partly conform to the classical Noh Theatre practice of using masked stage-hands to appear on-stage during the action.

Tom Fleming appears in a new play for solo actor, based on the life of Vincent van Gogh. It is called *Vincent, a self portrait*, and has its premiere at the Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh, on November 23. The author is W Gordon Smith. The play makes use of facts presented by the artist in his revealing, moving and very personal letters, using them to present a study of his life from his early frustrations as a minister among the miners of the Borinage right to his final madness and despair.

Wilfrid Hyde White returns to the London stage in January in James Bridie's play *Meeting At Night*. Others in the cast are Anna Manahan and Sydney Tafler, and the director is Donald McWhinnie. The production opens in London following a six-week national tour.



The Amazons, Pinero's play about three girls who, in deference to their father's wishes, are brought up as boys, opens in London as a musical in the New Year. Michael Stewart, author of *Hello, Dolly!* and *George M* and many other successful musicals, is now at work on the book; music will be by John Addison and lyrics by David Heneker. The show will be directed by Philip Wiseman.

Tom Courtenay plays the title role in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* when it is presented by the 69 Theatre Company in Manchester on December 21. Michael Meyer's translation will be directed by Michael Elliott with designs by Richard Negri, the trio responsible for the Old Vic production of the play in 1962.

John Kander and Fred Ebb, the American composer/lyric-writer team responsible for such hits as *Cabaret* and *Zorba*, have a new musical due for production on Broadway in the spring. Its title is *70—Girls—70*, and is based on the film comedy *Make Mine Mink*.

Peter Bridge is concluding a deal to co-present with American producer Michael Myerberg the new Alan Ayckbourn comedy *How the Other Half Loves* on Broadway. The American production will be directed by Gene Saks.

Ingrid Bergman will be seen in London in February, for the first time in five years. She is to play Shaw's Lady Cicely Waynflete in an H M Tennent revival of Captain Brassbound's Conversion. The play was last presented in London by the Old Vic in 1951.



Nicol Williamson is rumoured to be considering a return to the Royal Court to play Archie Rice in a revival of Osborne's *The Entertainer* as well as an unspecified Shakespeare play.

The Redgrave Theatre at Farnham is expected to open in the autumn of 1972. Work starts next March on the new £250,000 building which will replace the existing Castle Theatre (a converted barn now in a state of disrepair) where a repertory company has been in occupation for the past 25 years. The new air-conditioned theatre, designed by Frank Rutter, FRIBA, will seat 350 people. There will be no proscenium arch, and the auditorium will be wide and shallow, thus retaining the feeling of intimacy of the old 167-seat Castle. An appeal to raise £70,000 has been launched by Sir Michael Redgrave, and another £30,000 is urgently needed before building can start.

The Royal Gala performance to mark the official opening of Leeds Playhouse takes place on Thursday, December 10. Prince Charles will be present, to see the world premiere of Clifford Hanley's *Oh Glorious Jubilee!* which has music by Ian Gourlay and is a musical melodrama set in London in the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee: 1897.

Sarah Badel makes her debut with the National Theatre when Shaw's Mrs Warren's Profession opens at the Old Vic on December 29. She will be playing Vivie, Mrs Warren's daughter, opposite Coral Browne in the name part, in a production directed by Ronald Eyre.



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More truth about Sleuth

AS DIRECTOR of *Sleuth* for the Municipal Theatre Company NRT at Rotterdam, I thought it might amuse readers to hear that the Rev. Huckleberry's letter in the October *P&P* concerning the London production was taken very seriously by a feared and well known Dutch critic.

Obviously he had not seen *Sleuth* but the letter was reason enough for him to exclaim that even in the 'Mecca of theatre life' (ie London) 'the corrupt stage-people did not hesitate to cheat audiences after first nights'.

After that the Dutch stage got its part of his indignation too!

PIM DIKKERS,
van Oldenbarneveldstraat 105,
Rotterdam.

Accuracy in the Basement

IN THE OCTOBER *P&P* Brendan Hennessy gives an account of the founding of Quipu Basement Theatre which we would like to correct.

It is not accurate to say that the theatre was founded by David Halliwell and David Calderisi. The notion of starting a lunch-time theatre was ours. At an early stage when the premises had been found and the project was under way, Halliwell indicated that their organisation (Quipu) would be interested in coming in with us. We agreed to this and also agreed that the name of the theatre would incorporate that of our organisation (Basement Theatre) along with theirs, and that the choice of plays and the general line of policy would be decided by a committee consisting of both halves.

Most people have assumed that 'Basement Theatre' was merely the name of the theatre building and have thus tended to give the credit to Quipu. Whilst wishing to emphasise the contribution which the work of Calderisi and Halliwell has made, we think it only fair to point out that the responsibility for the day to day running of the theatre has been ours.

WALTER HALL, CARL FORGIONE,
Quipu Basement Theatre,
49 Greek Street, W1.

Behan defended

I FIND MYSELF completely at a loss, having read with disbelief Hugh Leonard's review of the Brendan Behan Biography by Ulick O'Connor in the October *P&P*.

Since Behan was 'a drunk and loud-mouth' one wonders how far Mr Leonard is prepared to go in his criticism of Behan—the abuse continues until the review concludes that the Biography's 'very existence serves only to perpetuate the same corrupt legend which killed Behan'.

When, one dares to ask, will Mr Leonard launch a play that is equal to the power of, say, *The Quare Fellow* or even *Borstal Boy*?

A. J. WARREN,
9 Clanricarde Gardens, W2.

A Reinhardt request

I AM WRITING the biography of the stage-producer Max Reinhardt (1873-1943) for a forthcoming edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and I am expanding my plan further to include a book on the subject.

Any personal account of any kind in any of the following languages, French, German, Italian, from any part of the world will be immensely appreciated and duly acknowledged.

HOVHANNES I PILIKIAN,
11 Lady Somerset Road, NW5.

Oh! Calcutta!

BY CHANCE I have just come across Helen Dawson's review of *Oh! Calcutta!* in the September *P&P*. Since my name is mentioned several times perhaps it will not be considered immodest if I proffer the following facts of my not inconsiderable interest and experience in the field of entertainment:

- 1 I studied at the RADA and took prizes all over London for poetry and play reading.
 - 2 I helped to run a Music Information Bureau for 8 years at HMV. Part of my work there was to select music for all sorts of occasions including background and 'mood' music for film and radio plays.
 - 3 I worked for ENSA during the war at Drury Lane (Cinema Division) and abroad, and assisted the Director of Music in Germany to organise classic concerts for the Forces.
 - 4 I have worked at various times at the Royal Opera House, Decca, Boosey & Hawkes (on their magazine *Tempo*), and in the music Dept of the BBC for two and a half years.
- 5 I ran a Concert Agency for young musicians for 7 years.
 - 6 I have held hundreds of auditions. The only thing that defeats me is a reviewer who can write of *Oh! Calcutta!* that it is a 'breakthrough', a barrier crasher, a 'bold and triumphant attack on the taboos which have hedged in the Western theatre for centuries', and in the same breath add that 'it might not always be artistic in its means' and that 'it seemed a small but healthy area of artistic exploration'.
- Finally, if indecent exposure, simulated copulation, perverted cavitings and fumbling and almost continuous foul language add up to an artistic theatrical success for 'the ordinary sensible playgoer' then the future of the theatre, and those who live by it, is indeed grim; and whatever Helen Dawson may say there is very real danger of corruption and depravity from such concentrated obscenity.

JANE BIRDWOOD,
DOWAGER LADY BIRDWOOD,
100 Philbeach Gardens,
London SW5.

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Doctor Faustus by Christopher Marlowe, directed by Gareth Morgan with David Waller as Faustus

Hamlet, directed by Trevor Nunn, with Alan Howard in the title role

King John, directed by Buzz Goodbody, with Patrick Stewart as the King and Norman Rodway as the Bastard

The Two Gentlemen of Verona, with Ian Richardson and Peter Egan as Proteus and Valentine

A Midsummer Night's Dream, directed by Peter Brook

The Tempest, directed by John Barton, with Ian Richardson as Prospero, Estelle Kohler as Miranda and Norman Rodway as Trinculo

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BRITISH DRAMATISTS

THE NEW ARRIVALS

No 9 ALAN AYCKBOURN AND DAVID CREGAN / Farce Resuscitated
JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

WE TEND TO EXPECT plays by new writers to be in some sense avant-garde, and the newer the writer the more avant-garde the play. We even sometimes seem to suggest that it is the young writer's duty to be avant-garde, and chastise him if he is falling short of this ideal by writing straightforward, old-fashioned sorts of play. But, of course, there is no necessary connection between youth and deliberate modernity. Indeed, one of the salient characteristics of the newer British drama has been exploration of a different sort: the re-examination and revivification of forms of the past, reclaiming for serious attention techniques and genres which have



fallen into disuse or at least into intellectual disrepute.

One obvious example of this process is the new interest shown by several of our younger dramatists in the most 'theatrical' of theatrical genres, melodrama and farce. Sometimes, perhaps, they have been prompted to look again by the influence of Brecht, with his theoretical advocacy of the distancing techniques natural to farce in order to induce a more critical attitude in audiences towards what is going on on stage. Sometimes, rather, it may be the influence of Theatre of the Absurd, Ionesco in particular, with its emphasis on the mechanical nature of farce, farce's shameless manipulation of its human puppets for the purposes of plotting, as a useful way of demonstrating the absurdity of the human condition. And sometimes, no doubt, it is just because the dramatists concerned enjoy traditional farce on its own familiar terms, and see no reason why they should not constructively exercise their enjoyment and pass it on to audiences supped full of horrors.

Alan Ayckbourn must surely belong wholeheartedly to this last group. Of all our younger dramatists he is the one who has most consistently and uncompromisingly avoided any suggestion of deeper meaning in his plays. Try as we may we cannot find any trace in his plays of social or political indoctrination masquerading as harmless diversion, let alone of cosmic anguish. His prime determination is unmistakably to make us laugh and keep us laughing, and all his considerable technical gifts are marshalled to that end alone. It is a tightrope, and a particularly dangerous, vertiginous tightrope at that, since if the writer stumbles he has no safety net of deeper significance to fall into: if his plays are not funny they are nothing. And while we are inclined to accept serious intent, however muffed, as a mitigating circumstance for a dramatist, unreasonably enough we see no merit at all in the dramatist who tries to make us laugh and fails.

Fortunately, this has not yet happened to Alan Ayckbourn. Even his less successful plays have always had at least that going for them. No doubt a lot of his basic theatrical instinct comes from the years he spent in the rough-and-tumble of provincial theatre, as actor, ASM, writer and general odd-job man. He was born in London in 1939, was educated at Haileybury till the age of seventeen, and has worked in the theatre, one way or another, ever since. Acting jobs came and went in rep at Worthing, Leatherhead and Oxford, and finally with Stephen Joseph's Studio Theatre in Scarborough, Stoke-on-Trent and elsewhere. During his time with the Studio Theatre he acted a wide variety of roles (I remember seeing him once, devastatingly, in drag as the dictatorial Cook in David Campton's *Little Brother, Little Sister*) and began to write, under the pen name of Roland Allen. His earliest plays were actuated primarily by the desire to give himself show parts as an actor, but as time went on he became more

Ayckbourn's *Relatively Speaking* (top), which ran for a year at the Duke of York's from March, 1967. *How The Other Half Loves* (left), now at the Lyric, where it opened in August

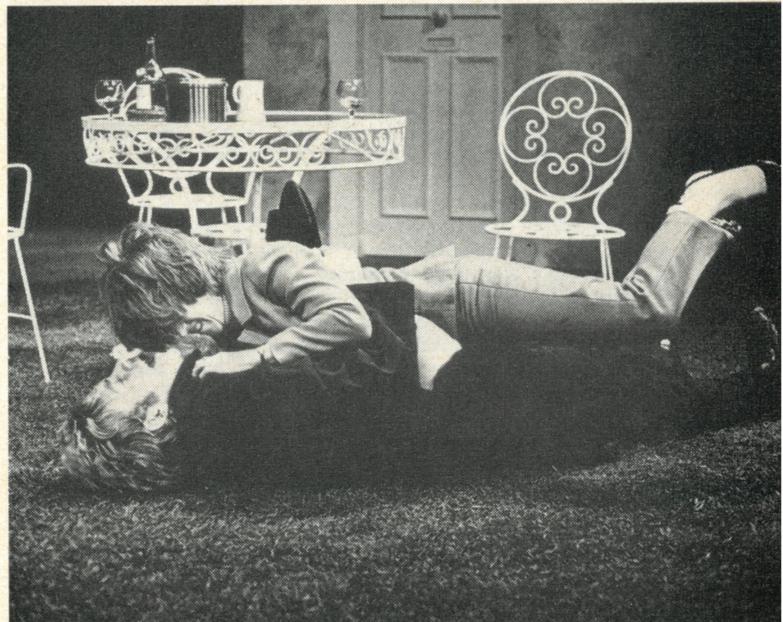
interested in writing per se, and less interested in acting.

The first real success of his writing in this phase was *Standing Room Only* (1961), in which the elements of his later style are clearly visible. The situation undeniably has overtones of Theatre of the Absurd. The play postulates a future (but probably not too far distant future) in which London has finally become immobilised by that great, ultimate traffic jam which there is no untangling. As a result of this, thousands of Londoners have resigned themselves to staying where the jam left them, camping out in cars and buses all over the West End. The action of the play takes place on a double-decker bus stuck in Shaftesbury Avenue, and it retails a few hours in the lives of five characters who have taken up permanent residence in it with considerable comic adroitness if at times some slight sense of strain at spinning out one joke quite so far. On the other hand, it already suggests Ayckbourn's particular speciality, the comedy of embarrassment, with its characters trying desperately to continue living normal, respectable, suburban lives in these very eccentric, public conditions.

Though there was talk of a West End production for *Standing Room Only*, it never actually materialised. Ayckbourn's first West End airing came instead with *Mister Whatnot*, staged by the Studio Theatre at Stoke-on-Trent in 1963 and at the Arts the following year. The oddity of this play was that it is about three-quarters mimed: the hero, a piano-tuner let loose in a stately home, never says a word throughout, and much of the rest of the action is conducted wordlessly. The piano-tuner falls in love with a Lord's daughter, and after various vicissitudes succeeds in marrying her, in the teeth of her family's objections and in spite of her fiancé, an effete but eminently suitable candidate for her hand. One might suppose that the main inspiration for the play was silent film comedy, but in fact its closest connections seem to be with the films of the Marx Brothers, and there are sections of the action which look like conscious tributes to Harpo in particular. For instance, there is a big meal-table scene in which our hero hides beneath the tablecloth and progressively eats and drinks his way round the table, to the puzzlement and consternation of the diners, who remain unaware of his presence and cannot understand why glasses and plates which, they could have sworn, were full a moment ago are now empty.

The audiences were amused, but the play got a mixed press and did not run. Not so with Ayckbourn's next West End play, *Relatively Speaking* (1967). This at once established itself as a major popular success, and went on to be translated into a dozen or more languages and produced all over the world. It is an essay in sheer mechanical ingenuity—the spinning-out of one joke beyond any reasonable possibility—and works as much on the audience's nerves (will he or won't he be able to come up with yet one more twist?) as directly on their funny bone. It thereby achieves the curious effect of being at once forced and funny. It turns entirely on one endless misunderstanding. A rather innocent young man involved in a serious affair with a not-so-innocent young girl decides he wants to marry her, and therefore wants to meet her family. She is evasive, but tells him that an address he finds scribbled on a cigarette packet is that of her parents, whom she is going to visit that Sunday. So, come Sunday, the young man turns up at a house in the country to introduce himself as Virginia's fiancé. But as we know, or very rapidly guess, the occupants are not her parents at all, but her former lover (an older man) and the lover's unsuspecting wife.

And that, as far as plot is concerned, is virtually it. The hero manages somehow, more and more improbably, never to introduce himself or explain what he is doing there, and remains sublimely unconscious of the mystification his arrival causes. The comedy then derives entirely from variations on embarrassment, with the well-bred hosts trying vainly to find out who their unexpected guest is and what he wants without appearing to do so. If the degree of evasiveness Gregg manages unconsciously to achieve is beyond the capacity (or incapacity) of any sane person, the responses of the older couple are beautifully observed and hysterically funny. The only further twist to the plot is the arrival of Virginia (quite coincidentally and also rather improbably), which shifts the burden of embarrassment and mystification from host-wife to husband and eventually enables the complications to be sorted out, even if no one on stage ends up much the wiser. At each stage in the play there is present,



Cregan's *Three Men for Colverton* (top) and *The Houses by the Green* (above)—both presented at the Royal Court in 1966 and 1968 respectively

shadowy but haunting, the feeling that the next moment it may just come to a stop, that even Ayckbourn's considerable ingenuity may run out and he will not be able to find another trick to keep things going in despite of all reason. It doesn't, and he does; the tightrope is successfully walked even though we are sometimes too uncomfortably conscious of the abyss which yawns beneath.

Much the same could be said of Ayckbourn's latest play, *How the Other Half Loves*. Here again mechanical ingenuity is the making, and at times almost the breaking, of the play. The initial situation is again quite simple: we meet two families, the Fosters (upper middle class) and the Philipses (on their way up), linked by the fact that the husbands both work in the same firm, and that Mrs Foster is having a secret affair with Mr Philips. The play would be quite slight and conventional, were it not for one brilliant technical device (a little like Peter Shaffer's switching of light values in *Black Comedy*) which makes it. This consists of superimposing the two households in one set, which is alternately or as a rule simultaneously the Fosters' drawing-room and the Philipses' living-room.

This enables simultaneous actions in the two houses to be not only crosscut but intertwined, with devastating effect when a hapless and socially out-of-their-depth couple, the Featherstones, are hit upon by both guilty parties as an alibi and have to take embarrassing part in two simultaneous and variously excruciating dinner parties at the same table. This sequence is the climax and really the *raison d'être* of the play; after it the various explanations and disentanglements come as a decided anti-climax. But where the play is funny it is very funny indeed, with a dash and conviction which makes all question of whether Ayckbourn can qualify (on the grounds of technical innovation) as a 'new dramatist' or must be written down (on the grounds of his subject-matter and flighty approach to it) as a crass conservative sublimely irrelevant.

David Cregan, now, is a very different matter. He too has specialised in farce, and in resuscitating the techniques of classic farce within the context of the modern theatre (specifically, within the framework of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court). But there can be little doubt of where his theatrical allegiances lie: he is unmistakably an intellectual playwright (which I think no one would accuse Ayckbourn of being) and his plays have made use of popular genres for anything but popular ends. In all of them, what seems to obsess Cregan above all is the elaboration of human patterns: farce, with its built-in tendency towards pattern-making, is the ideal form to give such obsessions full play. But Cregan's patterns are not entirely abstract: in the course of his plays he has some trenchant things to say about human nature, and despite the farcical surface of his writing, his fundamental observation of his fellow men would seem to be decidedly pessimistic.

Cregan was born in Buxton in 1931, educated at Cambridge, and has worked as a teacher for most of the time since leaving university. He appears to have made a relatively late start as a dramatist, since his first play staged did not emerge until 1965, but he had already made a small mark with a novel, *Ronald Rossiter*, about the slow development of a mixed-up boy into a sex murderer, as long ago as 1959. That was considered 'promising'; Cregan's first play, *Miniatures*, was far more than merely promising. It was given a production without décor at the Royal Court, but with a glittering cast including George Devine, Lindsay Anderson, Nicol Williamson, Bryan Pringle, Graham Crowden and others, which might be taken as some measure of the English Stage Company's interest in him.

No doubt influenced to some extent by Cregan's own experience as a teacher, *Miniatures* is a kaleidoscopic picture of life in a comprehensive school. Deliberately it avoids overall structure; it is built up out of tiny individual miniatures, cellular scenes which gradually reveal an intricate, shifting pattern beneath. The staff consists of old gown-wearing die-hards and aggressive or cynically offhand young products of the red brick universities, specialists in the arts, the sciences, and the social and economic in-betweens. And as in a beehive, there is constant buzzing to and fro, combinations, break-ups and re-combinations in an endless pattern of alliances, campaigns, withdrawals. And of all those we see, the queen bee/headmaster is the least secure, paralysed by doubts about the validity of the whole school system,

of education as such, and thrown into desperate immobility by the responsibility of it all. The only sign of uncertainty in this whole dazzlingly controlled first play is the very end, where a rather arbitrary suicide is brought in to mark the conclusion. But otherwise this very funny, very serious play seemed unmistakably to mark the arrival of a major new talent.

Not all of Cregan's subsequent work has altogether fulfilled the promise of *Miniatures*. It seems possible that he is, in fact, essentially a miniaturist in technique, less at ease with the requirements of a full-length evening's entertainment. Perhaps his best play of all is a one-acter, *Transcending* (1966), originally written as a curtain-raiser to the earlier-written *The Dancers*. *The Dancers* is a short, tough, piece taking up the beehive idea of human relationships from *Miniatures* and presenting it within the overall image of a dance. There are five characters in all: two couples who circle each other, engage, disengage, and finally settle for happy-ever-after (or is it?) marriage. A fifth, Brimley, who in a sense regulates the action, is, the author says, the only one who really knows what he is doing, and demonstrates the fact by sleeping off-stage for most of the play. The action is a constant, ever-shifting struggle for power, with everyone changing position wildly each moment, while the element of the dance, and the varied music (accompanied by varied stage lighting which it evokes), introduces another mechanistic facet to the characterisation—the people on stage seem to vary in mood and attitude largely (like Pavlov's dogs) according to the application of quite external and psychologically irrelevant stimuli.

Transcending gives Cregan an even better ground for the demonstration of his special talents. It retails the complete plot of what might be a five-act romantic tragedy or an intricate Feydeau farce (the materials, after all, are not necessarily different, only the attitude towards them) in comic-strip form. The teenage heroine, having failed yet again her A-levels, has to cope with (a) parents all too concerned for her peace of mind—provided it does not take too much of their time and energy to secure—(b) a thirtyish bachelor neighbour with no lustful designs on her at all until it is too late, and (c) an elderly widower and self-styled medium who is after her and nearly gets her mother instead. All this is conveyed in marvellously confident and effective theatrical shorthand, with many asides to the audience, and flashes past to a surprising but wholly logical conclusion in which the heroine suddenly reappears dressed as a nun, in the process of taking the veil. Cregan calls it 'an obvious joke' and denies that it has any deeper significance. He ought to know, but the play remains in the memory with a disturbing undertone of something one cannot quite define. It may be a joke, but the funniest jokes are often the most serious.

This tantalising, disturbing quality is even more evident in Cregan's next full-length play, *Three Men for Colverton* (1966). Again it is a struggle play, and again a lot of it is riotously funny. It concerns a struggle for the control, spiritual and mental, of a country village which for years has been completely dominated by a fearsome matriarch-figure, now dying. It is assumed that she can hand on the succession to anyone she nominates, and several people are in the running, notably the leader of a group of itinerant evangelists who have come mysteriously to the village (faint shades of the soldiers in *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*). The battle gradually draws in all shades of religious opinion, and reaches a climax when the evangelist, Brother Ched, bids for divine recognition by jumping off the village clock tower and is merely killed as a result. The play requires very fast production, whisking us lightly over and through a mass of complications so that we may keep the overall image of the struggle in mind. But perhaps it is just that little bit too complicated; certainly at the Royal Court it never quite fused into one consistent image, its canvas always seeming overcrowded.

That, at any rate, is not the trouble with *The Houses by the Green* (1968). It goes off in rather a different direction, though from appreciably the same starting-place. This time the intention seems to be a neo-Restoration artificial comedy, and all that side of *Transcending's* technique—the copious asides to the audience in particular—is cunningly extended. It all turns on sex

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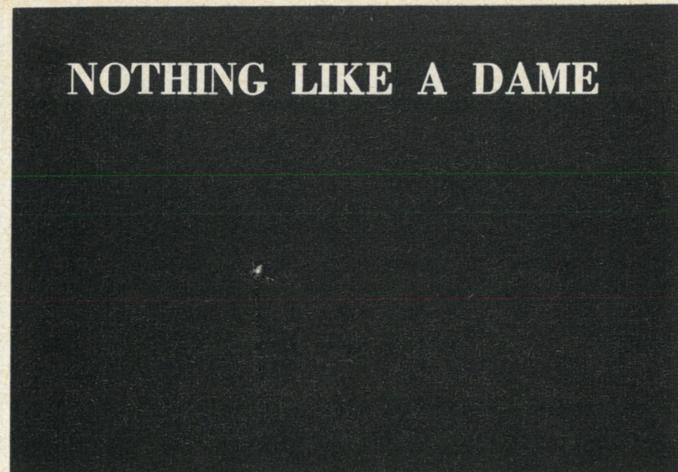
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NOTHING LIKE A DAME



PEGGY ASHCROFT talks to MARGARET TIERNEY

'I FEEL THAT the theatre has developed quite astonishingly during my life,' I think in fact it's grown up to a very large extent.'

Dame Peggy Ashcroft is the youngest of our theatrical Dames, but she can recall forty-four years during which the theatre has gone through possibly more violent upheavals than at any time in its previous history. Strangely, her prevailing sense is one of endless links in a chain.

'I think if I look back over the forty-four years I've been on the stage I see an enormous amount of change, but I also see a tremendous continuity. And perhaps this is what's always existed in the theatre. I think there's a state of perpetual revolution, existing side by side with roots that have been



there since the Greeks. We tend to believe that what seems new in the theatre has never been done before, but this isn't really true. For instance, take the companies that like to work through improvisation. You have only to look back to the Commedia dell'arte, whose performers surely based their work on improvisation.

'I think the function of the theatre changes with the times. The Greek idea was that tragedy was there to purge you with pity and terror. I don't know whether we ask tragedies to do that for us now. I think we ask them to disturb us. So if you ask me what the function of the theatre is at this moment I would say "to disturb", to question, because we're living through a very disturbing period, and it is for the theatre to probe, as, for instance, did Edward Bond in *Saved*, which is a play asking a question of society.'

One of Dame Peggy's earliest successful roles was the daughter Naemi in Ashley Dukes' adaptation of *Jew Suss*, at a time when plays were more concerned with telling a story than presenting a message. My suggestion that this was a somewhat naïve goal seemed, in itself, to strike her as amusingly naïve.

'Certainly some of the plays I performed in then wouldn't be put on now, but then they wouldn't be written now. People write out of their age and circumstances, and I think the reason the theatre has changed so rapidly is because the world is altering so fast.'

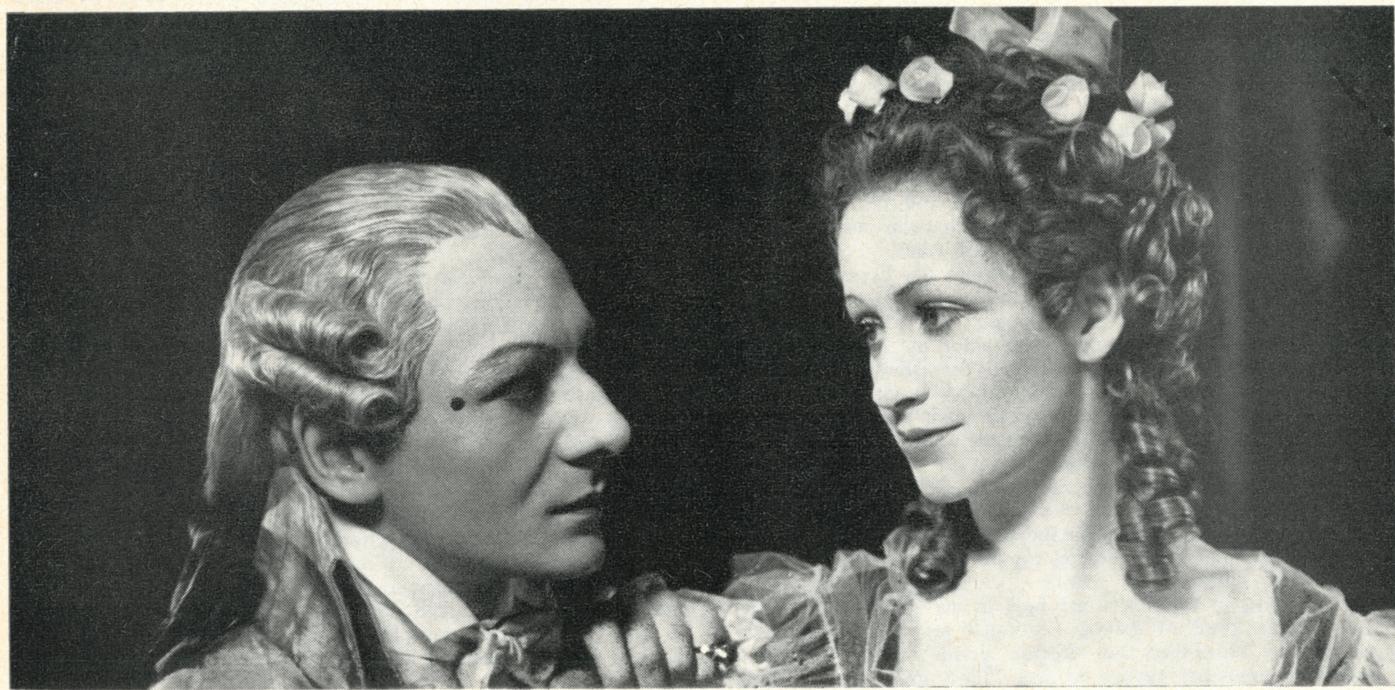
'*Jew Suss* started as a popular romantic novel before it was adapted into a play. At the time it was topical in its attitudes towards the Jews, which hadn't reached anything like the intensity of ten years later, under the Nazis. Neither the book nor the play would be written quite that way now, but plays are important in their own time, and should be seen in their own time. It's not necessarily a criticism of a play's value that it isn't valid for another age.'

'Of course a great play is for always, and not just of its own time. But I don't think the theatre has to consist only of great plays. Take a play like *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, which now is really a museum piece. You can't take that play seriously any more. But for its own time it was just as relevant as a play by Ibsen, which might deal with a similar theme, but still stands up today. How many of the plays we're doing today will stand up for future generations? It's anybody's guess.'

It's impossible to discuss the development of the theatre with Dame Peggy without coming to the subject of permanent ensemble companies. The establishment of such companies has



1938: *Three Sisters at the Queen's*. Peggy Ashcroft as Irina, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies as Olga and Carol Goodner as Masha
Opposite page, above: 1936: as Nina in *The Seagull*, with Edith Evans as Madame Arkadina, at the New. Below: 1937: as Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*, with John Gielgud as Joseph Surface, at the Queen's





As Rosalind, with Richard Johnson as Orlando, in the 1957 Stratford revival of *As You Like It*

that these are only studies for what you eventually may have the chance of playing. So use them, and don't worry if you can't make them what you feel they ought to be. One day you'll get nearer." And I did get another chance, at a time when I could bring more to them.'

In some cases the second chance came more than twenty years later. Portia, Rosalind, Imogen, Viola, are all roles that Dame Peggy tackled in her forties, prompting the critics to stand their priorities on end and produce a stream of ungallant remarks about her age, before proceeding to the real point of interest, her performance. 'Did they really?' The victim of these irrelevant obsessions is unbothered by them, and if anything amused.

'But didn't you know that all critics—and journalists' (with a wry look in my direction) 'are interested first of all in people's ages? Which is very superficial. Of course you have to screw up your courage if someone wants you to play Rosalind when you're fifty. But they probably have a good reason for asking you. In this country we're particularly ridden by the idea of age, but actors' ages should be separate from them. If they can convey what they want to convey, that's all that matters. When Peter Hall asked me to play Katherine the Shrew—at 52—with Peter O'Toole—I hesitated, then accepted—and never regretted it.'

'I think with the great parts, certainly Shakespeare parts, one is very lucky if one has the chance to play them more than once, because there is always something new to be discovered. And if the original production was long ago, that actually helps, because it's easier to put it out of your mind, and give the role a fresh approach.'

'I don't think there are any parts at the moment I want to repeat, or any that I haven't played that I want to try—though I probably would be ready to do both. There aren't a great many Shakespeare plays left for me to do. The nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* is a wonderful part, of course, and maybe some day I'll be asked to play that. Volumnia in *Coriolanus* doesn't interest me terribly, although I suppose that's an impertinent thing to say about what is considered one of the great Shakespearean roles. I think good modern roles have the greatest attraction for me now, and I hope they will turn up in plays I don't yet know about.'

The standard belief about the lack of good female parts outside the classics is something she doesn't wholly subscribe to.

'If you look back, even Shakespeare didn't write as many good women's parts as he wrote for men. But Ibsen—and I think this is very interesting—wrote a lot of his greatest parts for women. Even in *Rosmersholm*, *Rebecca* is really more interesting than Rosmer.'

'Many of today's writers are young men who perhaps tend to write out of their own experience, and out of introspection, and consequently put more into their men's roles than their women's. But Edward Albee and Harold Pinter have written wonderful parts for women (for which I have been grateful). And one of my own favourites is Marguerite Duras' "mother" in *Days in the Trees*.

'But thank goodness the emphasis today is not on writing wonderful parts for people, but on *plays*. And I think this is one of the reasons the companies and ensembles are so important.'

For someone who has worked with so many of the great names of the stage, to attempt to pick out individual influences must be an almost impossible task. Dame Peggy thought the directors played a vital role here.

'In my youth I would say the two greatest influences were Michel Saint Denis, whom I worked with in *Three Sisters*, *The White Guard* and later *Electra*, and Komisarjevsky, who did a lot of the first productions of Chekhov in this country. He also did productions at Stratford (though I was never in them) which were thought at the time to be outrageous innovations, but are now talked about as classics.'

'This is a good example of what I mean by continuity. Komisarjevsky influenced a lot of people who worked with him,
(to page 26)

been a lifelong ideal, and her own present association with the Royal Shakespeare Company, of which she is a director, can be traced back to an enthusiastic schoolgirl whose ideas about stage life were mainly formed by Henry Irving.

'I wanted to act since I was very young, about thirteen. And I had a completely romantic idea about the theatre, just from reading books about it. I hadn't been to see many plays, but I'd read about Irving's company at the Lyceum. But that was finished by the time I started, and there were no companies. It was the age of the drawing-room comedy, the West End show.'

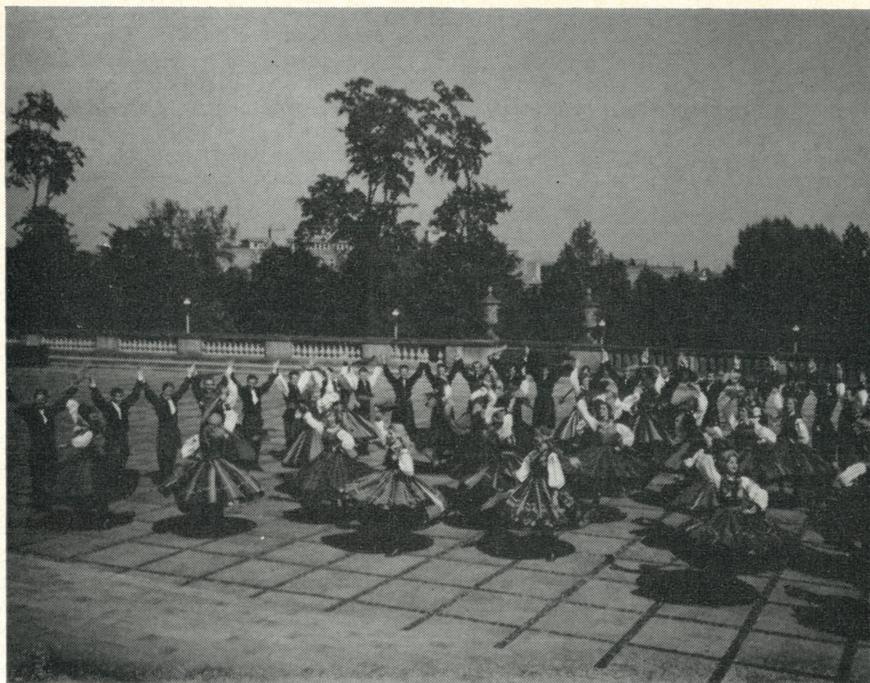
It was also an age when classical productions, without the protection of subsidies, had to stand or fall on their box-office appeal. The playwright's original truth became inevitably subordinate to the question 'Will this get them into the theatre?' At twenty-two Peggy Ashcroft's first professional contact with Shakespeare was playing Desdemona to Paul Robeson's Othello, in a cast that included Sybil Thorndike and Ralph Richardson. The cuts in the text infuriated the purists, but the spectacular, noisy and almost unmovable scenery delighted the public.

'There were several small art theatres round London, and Nigel Playfair was doing his productions at the Lyric, Hammersmith, the young actors' Mecca. Then there were the repertoires, which was where one thought the really important theatre was. Also, I think any young actor of that period was interested in theatre abroad. One read Stanislavsky and knew about the Moscow Art Theatre, and the National Theatres in other countries, and wondered why we hadn't got one. There was the Old Vic, but that couldn't engage actors as a permanent company, only season by season.'

Her own first Old Vic season was in 1932 when, although only twenty-four, she entered the company as a leading lady to play ten major roles. They included Portia, Rosalind, Imogen, Juliet, Miranda and Lady Teazle, all of which she was to play again at later stages in her career.

'It was a killing venture, quite beyond my scope at the time, and I knew it. And of course I suffered because I felt inadequate. And I remember the director Komisarjevsky (to whom I was later married) saying to me, "You must try to think

The Magic of Poland

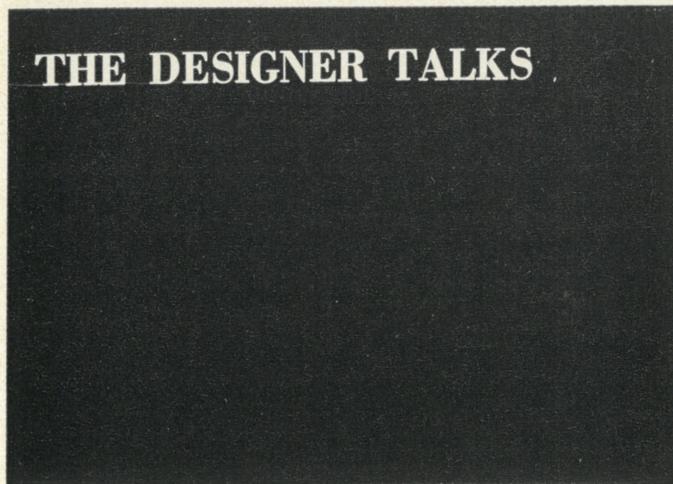


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THE DESIGNER TALKS



CARL TOMS in interview with ROBERT WATERHOUSE

IN THE AQUINAS STREET premises of the National—purpose-built, one might think today, as the site office for the new theatre—Carl Toms perches happily on a hard chair. A freelance designer since he stopped being assistant to Oliver Messel some 13 years ago, Toms has found new purpose with the National, and particularly with the Young Vic where he is head of design and has renewed his old working relationship with Frank Dunlop. For the National itself his design for *Cyrano* has just got under way at the Cambridge, and he's also responsible for *Vivat! Vivat Regina!* at the Piccadilly.

His prolific professionalism has never been in question, but Toms feels that he was for too long branded by the romantic Messel image, which John Russell Taylor memorably summarised as 'cobwebs and draped tulle'. One would have thought that *Cyrano* was prone to that sort of approach, but Toms believes that Patrick Garland's free adaptation has turned it firmly towards realism. 'He tried not so much to modernise as to push towards the physical. You can't take all the romance

out of it, but you can't today do it in a full dress pretty way. I based my designs on engravings by Jacques Callot who, like Goya, saw the human problems of war. I tried to get a down-to-earth active look, with everything working. The sets change without a break—the tables in the pastry shop, for instance, become the fence for the garden scene which in turn becomes the barricade for the battlefield.'

At the Young Vic, Toms designed the opening production, *Scapin*, and *The Soldier's Tale* this September (both were originally seen at the 1967 Edinburgh Festival). 'We are trying to work out a style of presentation that is free of all encumbrances, and have already found that if you are more casual, without relying exactly on improvisation, unplanned and unforced creative things happen. What we want to try out is a basic costume for all productions—to get away from the idea of individual time-consuming designs. This kind of theatre uniform, on the lines of Copeau's Vieux-Colombier, allows you to change your minds during a production, and really turn the stage over to the actors, concentrate on a theatre of ideas. Everyone feels released by this, not least me, for I no longer want to make a pretty picture and show people what I can do.'

The influence of Frank Dunlop is not difficult to trace here; Toms admits that, for the moment, the Young Vic is very much Dunlop's theatre—and rightly too. What attracts Toms to the new theatre is its openness and lack of definition. 'Sometimes I might change a model half-way through, or sometimes not even make one at all. You just can't do this in a full Old Vic production—it's too risky. At the same time one is much safer doing a big show, which includes all the normal direction and design stages. You could come a terrible cropper at the Young Vic and that makes me nervous. But what we are attempting is to get some excitement into theatre, like at a race or a football match, trying to get audiences involved. After all, the theatre wasn't always the pompous set-up that it tends to be today. Elizabethan actors gave fine performances in very untheatrical conditions. However, it's still very important that there is lots of disciplined conventional theatre. I want to be shocked by achievement—by great writing, directing and acting. Anyone can say "fuck" on stage: what we lack is greatness.'

In a sense, Toms has come full circle with his job at the Young Vic. After Mansfield College of Art and an abortive period at the Royal College of Art (where the theatre department consisted of himself and Peter Rice, and was promptly disbanded) he went to the Old Vic School and learnt his craft under George Devine and Motley. On leaving, he went to work with Oliver Messel and didn't do a solo design until 1957—

to page 26



Carl Toms' costume for Queen Elizabeth, worn by Eileen Atkins in Robert Bolt's play *Vivat! Vivat Regina!* at the Piccadilly, the set of which he also designed. Carl Toms' set for 'Cyrano', at the Cambridge, is featured on page 43

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CATHARINE HUGHES

GOOD YOUNG—or, for that matter, old—playwrights are hard to come by these days. On the basis of *The Happiness Cage* at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Public Theatre, Dennis J Reardon might turn out to be a very good one indeed. He certainly has all the symptoms.

His play has lots of symptoms, too, but of the medical-psychological kind. The 'happiness cage' of the title is a ward in a Veterans' Administration hospital. It is cluttered and seedy ('What're they tryna do, grow their own penicillin?'), and when Reese arrives with his broken arm and his broken psyche, it has two other inhabitants. Both have terminal cancer, one of the lung, the other of the digestive track.

Why has he been placed in a cancer ward? Why, on second thought, is the head of a patient with abdominal cancer bandaged? Reese is lonely and neurotic, and he rapidly becomes more neurotic as the comings and goings of the hospital staff and of 'The Visitors' become ever more puzzling.

And what of Dr Freytag, whose research facilities occupy the second level of the set? What is the hush-hush project he is involved in—a project it is suggested which may bring him a Nobel Prize? Still another question: Why are the government and the army so concerned with its progress?

When the first of the other patients dies, the second becomes the doctor's most obvious candidate for guinea pig. After he haemorrhages ('Kind of a red-letter day for you, isn't it?'), he is hauled off upstairs and induced to have Freytag's wire implanted in his brain. Freytag unfolds his project—to make people happy, not by the transitory stimulants they occasionally encounter in their lives, but permanently, with the aid of his tiny electrical device. A happy soldier, after all, is a good soldier; a populace lulled is a populace decorous and submissive.

Reese's moment comes, and he attempts to rebel, insisting that he is entitled to his neuroses, his loneliness, his unhappiness, his pain; that they constitute an inviolable aspect of his humanity, contribute to his uniqueness as an individual. But it goes almost without saying that he, too, will be caught in the happiness cage. Not even Freytag's admission that he cannot justify the methods, that they are 'repugnant' to him, will enable the man to triumph over the mechanism of science or the state.

All of which doubtless makes *The Happiness Cage* sound vastly more thesis-ridden and portentous than it is in the



Above: Ronny Cox and Bette Henritze in 'The Happiness Cage', a new play by Dennis Reardon at the Newman Theater
Right: The cast of Kurt Vonnegut Jnr's 'Happy Birthday, Wanda June' at Off Broadway's Theatre de Lys

playing. (In fact, it frequently reminded me of *The National Health*, and not merely in the setting.) Reardon, who according to a programme note based the play on an incident he heard of in 1966 while a student at the University of Kansas, creates vivid, engrossing and often macabrely funny scenes, abounding in taut and convincing dialogue, and Tom Aldredge's production extracts all the tension and suspense (and a bit too much of the melodrama) there are. With a little luck, and a little more discipline in pruning ideas and superfluous dialogue, Reardon will be very much worth watching.

In fact, he already is.

About a minute into Kurt Vonnegut, Jnr's, *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, a character announces, 'This is a simple-minded play about men who enjoy killing and those who don't.' Well, no. The author of *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Cat's Cradle* isn't about to do anything 'simple-minded'.

Harold Ryan, Hemingwayesque he-man, big-game hunter and the youngest soldier in the Abraham Lincoln brigade, has been missing for eight years and his wife is entertaining the pleas of two suitors, one a \$43,000-a-year vacuum cleaner

salesman, the other a doctor whose hallmark is the peace symbol. One night, when she is about to marry the doctor, Harold returns, accompanied by Colonel Looseleaf Harper, who dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

Harold Ryan is 'one of the great heroes of all time', boastful of his courage, his adventures, his sexual prowess. The walls of his apartment resemble a natural history museum, a taxidermist's paradise. There are the heads of a rhinoceros and an elephant, of deer, leopards, zebra and a water buffalo, all killed on one or the other of Harold's periodic hunting trips. But eight years have passed and some things are different. His wife, who once delighted in his virility and bedmanship, has refined her tastes. Their young son is of an age where his hero worship occasionally shows signs of wear around the edges. Looseleaf Harper notices something else: 'You know what gets me? How everybody says "shit" and "fuck" now. Something big must have happened.'

Whatever else, Harold Ryan is out of style. He talks of 'a strange blue soup' that he and Looseleaf ate while in Africa, and how it rendered them peaceful and euphoric, the antithesis of their former temperaments. With his return to America he reverts to type, proclaiming his credo: 'Never mind your bodies and your spirits, take care of your things.' But in the doctor he finds a new and different adversary, one of the 'new heroes who refuse to fight and try to save the planet'. It is no longer enough to rely on fists or rifle —'an iron penis three-feet long'. 'Evolution,' the doctor tells him, 'has made you a clown.'

Harold is a self-defined 'antique hero'. Wounded in his pride and with his manhood under challenge, he goes off to his son's bedroom with the .22-rifle he had given the boy. There is a shot. 'I missed. The end.'

For all its portentousness and occasional lack of focus, *Wanda June* is often a very funny play. Vonnegut's one-liners have valid roots in the characters and culture they reflect and his individualistic, sometimes anarchic perspective on the world is entertainingly unstereotyped.

Vonnegut isn't the only cult-hero to turn up Off Broadway in the early months of the season. There's also *Alice in*

Wonderland, in an extraordinary new experimental production that has recently emerged from months of underground celebrity.

André Gregory's *Alice* visits a world that is a blend of humour and terror. But before she can get there, the audience —which has entered Gregory's version of the rabbit hole through an undersize door—watches the other actors swing and fling her about in simulation of Alice's fantasy journey down the well to *Wonderland*. An actor's back becomes the table from which she takes the golden key; four actors bend to form the mushroom on which the great caterpillar sits smoking—his arm a substitute for Carroll's hookah—and dispensing his orders and his advice. The Mad Tea Party scene is sinister, macabre, with an element of menace and mystery that goes beyond Carroll. This is a Mad Hatter who is very mad indeed, a comic-horror figure in an adult fairy tale, whose topsy-turvy anarchism has its carefully understated parallels to today.

Gregory and his Manhattan Project actors are faithful both to Lewis Carroll and to the moment. The plot and the lines, with rare exceptions, are Carroll's; the resonances are contemporary, highly physical and imaginative improvisations in the manner of Grotowski and the Open Theatre. The tiny Extension Theatre, usually the home of an Off-Off Broadway company, has been turned into a rabbit hole, with a tent-like canopy at its centre, a table that substitutes for a house, an inverted lampshade to replace the Queen of Hearts' crown.

'You can't believe in impossible things,' says Alice, but Gregory's seven actors do some almost impossible things in physically realizing the fears and fantasies of Carroll's *Alice*. Various people have found contemporary motifs in it, from a drug trip to a parable on Jerry Rubin's trial experience. For what it's worth, I toss out some lines addressed to Alice at the very end of the play: 'I should not know you if we met again because you are so exactly like so many of the others.' Gregory's *Alice* is like very little else that has been done in the American theatre, an imaginatively conceived and brilliantly executed theatrical adventure in a disconcertingly recognisable wonderland.



Picture by Bert Andrews

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CARLTONS — from page 22

Giraudoux' *Apollo de Bellac* at the Royal Court, in the same programme that Jocelyn Herbert began her career with Ionesco's *The Chairs*. 'That was my only commission at the Court, because Devine thought I was a bit of a decorative designer. He was probably right, but I hope I've tamed that side now.' The association with Messel (Lord Snowdon's uncle) gave Toms his entrée into designing—or decorating—for high society. This has alternated with theatre work throughout the last 15 years, and culminated in his being a design consultant for Prince Charles' investiture at Caernarvon Castle last year. Toms sees no discrepancy in designing a carpet for Princess Margaret, sexy film dresses for Raquel Welch or Ursula Andress, preferring eighteenth century to modern furniture, and still adhering to the basic Old Vic School-Royal Court principles which state that the play's the thing and gaudy decoration is out.

'Unity is everything, and ideally a director should design sets and costumes and light the show as well. The directors who go furthest towards this—Zeffirelli and Peter Brook—are open to criticism, but they get nearest to perfection. I'm not always visually satisfied by Brook's productions but they are a whole intellectually. I love working for directors with good visual sense, people like Frank Dunlop and John Cranko, who have a way of indicating without being dogmatic, who inspire and spark me off then leave me to it. In a curious way you should ideally come out of a play without having noticed the sets or the direction. Not that I don't strive to get noticed, to make a statement, but that really depends on the director. I would be a bad designer if I imposed my own effect on the play. The author is all-important, and if he can give me a visual lead so much the better. While I was working on *Regina*, Robert Bolt was always ringing me up or writing notes—not trying to dictate anything, but to feed me ideas.'

Toms always designs his own costumes, and would like to light as well, but feels that today's lighting designers are

sensitive enough to interpret what he wants and also that he would waste electricians' time by not knowing the technical procedure. Costume is another matter altogether, but here again his attitude has changed markedly with the times. 'Just as I used to love painted scenery and am now totally absorbed in solids, sculptural shapes and built forms, I am trying to get actors to stop thinking they are wearing "costumes". I prefer to costume stage clothes. I think the National system, where stage clothes are worn for three working weekends in rehearsal, has been a great help in changing actors' attitudes. It is an indication of the revolution the theatre has gone through in 15 years or so.'

Though Toms much prefers to have complete freedom once he has worked out basic ideas with directors, he admits that there are many pitfalls. He has had successes and failures (he 'failed miserably' with costumes for Sloboda's setting of *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* at Covent Garden) in many kinds of theatre, opera and ballet. But one of his favourite interludes was costume designing for Raquel Welch in *One Million Years BC*. He was recommended to Hammer Films by Monty Berman, the costume maker, and enjoyed the conscious kitsch exercise of dressing the famous Welch body as if the furs had been tied on to her.

After many years as a freelance, Toms says that he always feels nervous about a new commission and wonders whether he is going to be employed again. But he emphasises that it is the edgy excitement of a production, perhaps beginning with simple nervousness, that often makes or breaks it. 'The audience-stage relationship is very sensitive—an audience can pick up a sense of depression or elation without quite knowing why. We designers may have different visual ideas but we're less inclined to project our egos now; we don't want to be flashy any more. We want authority but that doesn't mean a great splashy show.' Toms has come round to believing that committee decisions are often the most workable ones, and is content that the designer is an accepted and respected member of the backstage committee.

PEGGY ASHCROFT — from page 20

such as John Gielgud. Gielgud was really the first person in my lifetime who tried to start a more or less permanent company. He couldn't sign people on for years, but he did keep a group of actors together whom he wanted to work with as an ensemble. I played in his season at the Queen's Theatre in 1937/38, and before that at the New Theatre. Among that group were George Devine, Glen Byam Shaw and Michel Saint-Denis, and these three started the Young Vic. That venture came to an end, unfortunately, and they went their different ways. But eventually George Devine started the Royal Court, which I think has caused the biggest change in the English theatre in my time. There was a basic alteration in the type of play that could be done in London. Authors who would never have been considered by commercial managements have had a platform since then.

'Glen Byam Shaw went to Stratford, chose Peter Hall to work for him, and it was eventually through Glen that Peter

Hall became the next director of Stratford. He in his turn invited Michel Saint-Denis to produce *The Cherry Orchard* and then became one of the directors of the company. So you get a sort of circle that goes on and on, each generation being influenced by the one before, but recreating in its own way, and for its own time, and then influencing the next generation.

'There's a new generation at work in the present Stratford Company, and for me one of the pleasures of being there is the chance to work with young actors and directors; and seeing how much more democratic things are than when I was beginning! When I was young there was a gulf between the young and the old. The young had the most inordinate awe and respect for their elders, which was a pity because it separated them. In those days you just did what the director told you. Now there is more give and take, with everybody having something to contribute. And this, I think, is one of the marvellous things about the modern theatre.'

And what is wrong with it? 'Oh, as with most things—it's economics. In spite of all Equity has done—which is a lot—there is still too great a discrepancy between the top salaries and the bottom. But that should have an article all to itself.'

AYCKBOURN AND CREGAN — from page 16

and money (the vital constituents of any holding story) in about equal proportions. Rich Mervyn Molyneux is going to give his adopted daughter Susan a fortune on her marriage. This fact has something (though not everything) to do with the interest shown in her by the neighbouring Commander—who disguises himself as a swinging denizen of the discotheques to woo her—and the butler Oliver. It also interests Molyneux himself, who is nurturing plans to marry the girl too and keep hold of his own money, assuming for the purpose the guise of a conservative landed gentleman. The plot is complicated by the suspicions of everybody that everybody else is planning horrid developments on the site of their rustic haven, the Green, and before things

have worked themselves out Susan and Oliver have also assumed disguises, and Susan has been transformed in the middle by a sudden, unpredictable bacchic frenzy at the idea of limitless procreation (unfortunately disappointed by the unreadiness of any of her supposedly passionate suitors actually to impregnate her).

The whole plot is worked out with fiendish care and ingenuity, shamelessly using obvious theatrical devices like the aside and the most transparent disguises. But 'demonstration' is the *mot juste*: it is all very sharp and dry, more like an academic demonstration than an organic piece of drama. So, of course, was *Transcending*, but at greater length one really needs a little more flesh on the skeleton. All the same, the play is likeable, and wholly personal. Cregan, even at his least successful, has a style and a tone of voice which are all his own. It is unthinkable that we have yet heard the last of him.

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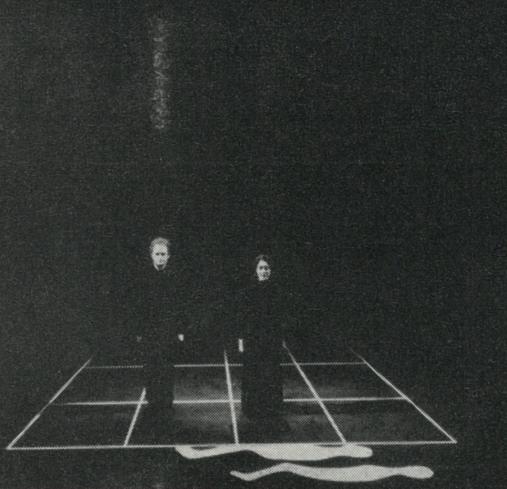
FIRST NIGHTS



ROYAL COURT

COME TOGETHER

REVIEWER VINCENT GUY



Playback 625 and (below) the Ken Campbell Road Show—two of the score of groups making up the Royal Court's 20-day festival, *Come Together*

A COLD BLUE HAND resting like dead flesh in mine, leaving it tacky with blue paint...

Smell of damp newspaper as Christie fucks his flailing dummy/victim...

A naked girl, eyes full of cold anger, stands while a bathful of red paint is poured over her, through her hair, over her breasts, through her crotch to make a pool on the floor...

A look of something worse than embarrassment on the face of a man arrested by the actors in a wart-hunt...

Come Together seems rather a merry title for this lot. Death, Fear, Darkness, Decay were the themes. Jokes courtesy of Dostoevski. Pictures by Bosch. But it's true there was a free chatty disputatious atmosphere in and around the building; not formal discussions, just getting into animated exchanges about things seen. For this if nothing else, the event must be accounted a very positive success.

My own situation facing a festival of 'new' theatre is that I am more than a little tired of the 'old', except at its very best; which gives one a fairly open mind. Anyway, for the record, the festival statistics are these. It lasted twenty days, presented (despite last-minute changes of programme) some twenty groups ranging from pop to Beckett. Sloane Square itself was in use as well as both Upstairs and Downstairs at the Court. Repainted and gutted seat-wise, the theatres were open most days all day and far into the night.

The audience and its behaviour was at least as interesting as the performances. The discussion after the *CAST* show was far more theatrical than the show we had seen. The political passion for Marxist orthodoxy in the troupe was matched by equal passion for every shade of heterodoxy among the audience. Like too many political discussions, it developed into a screaming match, in which attitudes were polarised into extreme opposition. But all the shades of political opinion were represented, from Trade Union Marxism to Tim Leary Utopianism to informed liberalism to perhaps more reactionary attitudes among the people who walked out during the show. The climax came when a small hysterical with a Lenin beard climbed onto a pile of chairs screaming slogans and abuse and (perhaps symbolically) fell off.

Walking in and walking out; audience-participation and audience-interruption. The most lively was with Stuart Brisley. A compressed description of the show: Brisley fills himself with brown bread and water, while a scaffolding structure is built slowly and methodically by some companions. Climax: Brisley climbs the structure and vomits from the top of it. Throughout Brisley hurls resentment at the audience including, 'Have you come to watch a vomit?' Questions like these call for answers and they came. The performers dealt with calls from the house by repeating them, parrot fashion, but with great venom. This provoked even more calls from the house till a real rally was building up, rather like two warring tribes hurling warcries and abuse at one another before a battle. Unfortunately the fray never developed. Brisley, probably exhausted from his regurgitative efforts, took his horde off stage.

The most pointed intervention was in *AC/DC* at the climax of Sadie's rap against Mick Jagger delivered with ferocious energy by Sheila Scott-Wilkinson—an electric pause—'Rubbish' from a man at the back—'Rubbish' from a woman at the front. Both cries as if involuntary. And from Sadie—'Wow, I really hit the seed shit that time.' The timing of the whole pattern of attack and response was superb, I thought that Sadie's line had been a felicitous ad-lib, but no: it stands there firmly in the script of *AC/DC*.

The John Cage piece from the Gentle Fire consisted of a sequence of strange noises from the soloist accompanied by even stranger noises from unspecified sources. The audience joined in with gusto, clucking, whistling, cat-calling, in a spirit of gentle

mockery. As the next number was being set up, a voice called 'Can we join in this one too?'

By the time we got to the last night I was quite prepared for anything. A portly gentleman in hat and coat muttering obscenities in fact attempted to clamber over my head during a rather serious moment in *The Whitby Lifeboat Disaster*. Only when his resisting personage was removed by the house manager did it occur to me that he was a drunk who had wandered in from Sloane Square. Or was he?

There were some entertaining side shows, too. Best was the guy who grabbed my arm in the foyer, demanded tuppence for a ticket and with an air of urgent secrecy hustled me out to see a censored 'sex-and-violence' show in a phone box. Two sugar lumps were produced from under a cloth, squirted with red ink from a hypodermic needle, 'That's the violence now for the sex' as he pulled me out of the phone box, a girl appeared, kissed me vigorously on the cheek and I was hustled back into the theatre. A beautiful miniature on classic themes.

No particular 'angle' or common obsession emerges from the festival, which I would take as a sign of great health in this area of theatre. I saw only one naked body, a very beautiful one, presented with great simplicity and strength, by the People Show. The experiments are on many different lines and the chief variable is in the way the audience relates to the event (ie the nature of theatre itself).

THE POP SHOWS. It was good to see the pop and folk crowds in the theatre, but it would have been much more interesting in this context to have seen some of the groups who are working in the borders between theatre and pop (like Principal Edwards Magic Theatre). I find the heavy rock 'n' roll rhythm destroys the melody and harmony that folk music is all about. So, for me, the first concert only came alive in Sandy Denny's one unaccompanied solo. Jack Bruce's Lifetime was the most interesting sound of the festival; Atomic Rooster the loudest.

CAST. 'Excruciating' is the most apt word I can find. Instruments played crudely at high amplification, voices popping and banging through microphones, two explosions that left me clasping my ears in pain, (symbolising the two world wars), every word apart from a short whispered finale, delivered at screaming pitch. The sheer volume of unorchestrated sound in the enclosed space of the Theatre Upstairs made me want to crawl into a corner and die. The show seemed very much out of its natural habitat. In a TU hall or a park it might be effective and meaningful; here one could only look at it like a caged wild beast of the species Political Street Theatre.

THE KEN CAMPBELL ROADSHOW came to dispel the tensions of political argument with dirty songs and droll stories. Pint in hand, with an infectious feeling of vitality and enjoyment they put over a string of sketches based on titbits of modern folklore. I was sitting in the front row, and by the end my trousers were spattered with egg and there was chocolate cake in my shoes. This had more of the theatre of cruelty about it than many more pretentious efforts; a nice link between Artaud and the pub entertainer, *The Man On the Monument* in which two beggars strip a suicidal lover of his clothes could well be Buñuel; and the boy changing into a chicken is straight Kafka. It was all about madness, mutilation, rape and perversion, and the best laugh I've had in years.

LEOPOLDO MAHLER'S TV IN THE THEATRE had some interesting technical ideas in it—actors relating to each other via separate closed circuit TV. This was intriguing but no more than that. Mahler has said that his piece is not about machine-dominated man but about relationships between images. Even so, it seems the machines win after all. The techniques are so fascinating that one loses sight of the images and the actors. Perhaps there

should be a new version of the old adage: 'Never act with children, dogs or television sets.'

BRISLEY'S CELEBRATION FOR DUE PROCESS described briefly above. As interesting as the extrovert anger of Brisley himself was the quiet concentration other members of the group directed towards certain simple tasks: typing on white paper, sorting a pile of grey rubbish, moving pieces of white metal. A mood was established, a change imposed on the audience's feelings. The limitation of the piece is in its deliberate inarticulacy. Our feelings are aroused but 'to what end?' or even 'what feelings are they?' Everything is blurred and undefined. Next day Brisley is in the bar, very articulate, witty, clearminded, a twinkle in his eye (evidently his stage persona is very much an acting job). He describes meanings intended regarding class structure, Monarchy etc. There is a gap here.

CARLYLE REEDY takes the theatre direct into the world of dream. It's one in the morning, we've seen two or three different shows in the course of the day. Only a few of us are left, sitting among the peanut wrappers. Carlyle Reedy with epidiascope and wearing an embroidered robe, projects strange images onto a screen superimposed on an image of her own face. She recites scraps of doggerel relating the images to 'The Fish'. Occasionally a sudden movement, a hieratic gesture, a snatch of Kabuki. She comes down the ramp into the audience, opens a coffin taking out an enormous dead fish; struggling with the weight she drags it up-stage and attaches it to a heavy metal hook. 'The Fish' swings on the end of a long rope in the rays of a projector. Later she takes it off and returns it to the coffin. It has the feeling of a rite, a sacrifice, deep life-forces are evoked. The Performer as High Priestess.

PETER DOCKLEY'S FOULFOWL. The theatre is in semi-darkness. On stage a complex of cages and hen coops. Noise of chickens on the sound system. Dry ice. Chickens running across the floor. A trough filled with chicken feathers in which lie several human bodies painted blue. We are ushered in in groups of ten or so and most people seem to leave after a few minutes. Something reminds me of a circus freak-show, or of a nativity crib. From time to time the bodies move or are moved. Chains clank. A noise starts and reaches the pain threshold. We cover our ears. Some carpet foam is released and slides down the stage. I feel unaccountably excited and expectant, anything could happen. Nothing happens. Time stands still. Most people drift away. Somebody, in a spirit of compassion, rouses one of the blue bodies and takes it off the stage. The others seem unwilling to leave their feather bed and twitch away from any approach. The bodies have names: 'Nick, you can come out now' somebody whispers. The theatre carpenter has lost a chicken. Vacuum cleaners arrive and start to pick up the feathers. We leave, and argue for two days, as if we had all seen different events.

THE WHITBY LIFEBOAT DISASTER from the Victoria Stoke-on-Trent seemed a strange bedfellow in this company, their resources being distinctly traditional. Never having seen them at work before and having perhaps idealised them in my own mind, I must confess to being very disappointed. Much of the acting seemed to depend on cliché and 'indication'. When I see, for example, a policeman take up a policeman-like pose, unless it is to make some satirical comment, I see red. Nevertheless the singing of maritime hymns and the enactment of the loss of the lifeboat were very moving.

Congratulations to Pete Kuttner's *Eat* for demonstrating that rainbow coloured bread with mauve butter tastes like ordinary bread and butter.

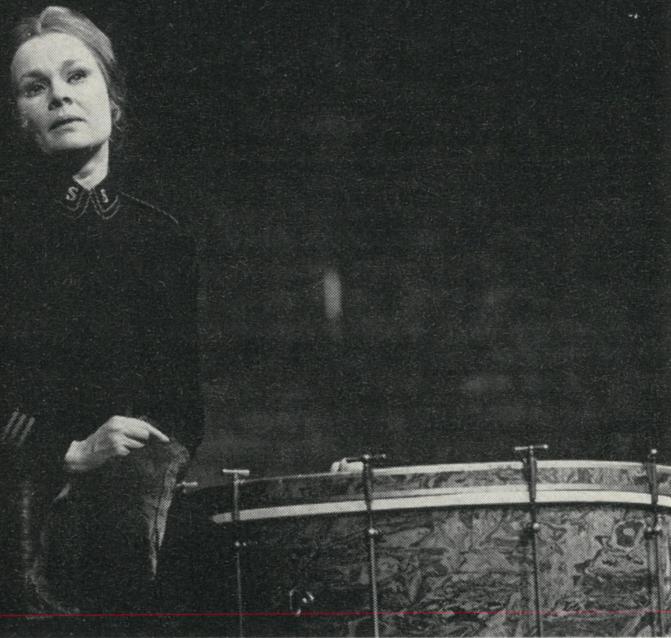
And to the English Stage Company for showing how many vital streams there are in and around the English theatre. 'Come Together' they said.

We came.

ALDWYCH

MAJOR BARBARA

REVIEWER STANLEY PRICE



Above: Judi Dench as Major Barbara

Opposite page, left to right: Undershift (Brewster Mason) manufacturer of armaments, revisits his wife, Lady Britomart (Elizabeth Spriggs), for his first meeting with his grown-up children Sarah (Lisa Harrow) and Barbara and her Greek-scholar fiancé Adolphus Cusins (Richard Pasco)

'THROUGH UNIVERSAL EDUCATION and cheap printing poor boys become rich and powerful. Dickens, rich. Shaw, also. He boasted that reading Karl Marx made a man of him. I don't know about that, but Marxism for the great public made him a millionaire. If you wrote for an élite, like Proust, you did not become rich, but if your theme was social injustice and your ideas radical you were rewarded by wealth, fame and influence.'

Thus old Mr Sammler in Saul Bellow's fine recent novel *Mr Sammler's Planet*. Shaw himself would scarcely have taken umbrage. In his preface to *Major Barbara* he quotes with approval Samuel Butler's insistence on the necessity of 'an earnest and constant sense of the importance of money'.

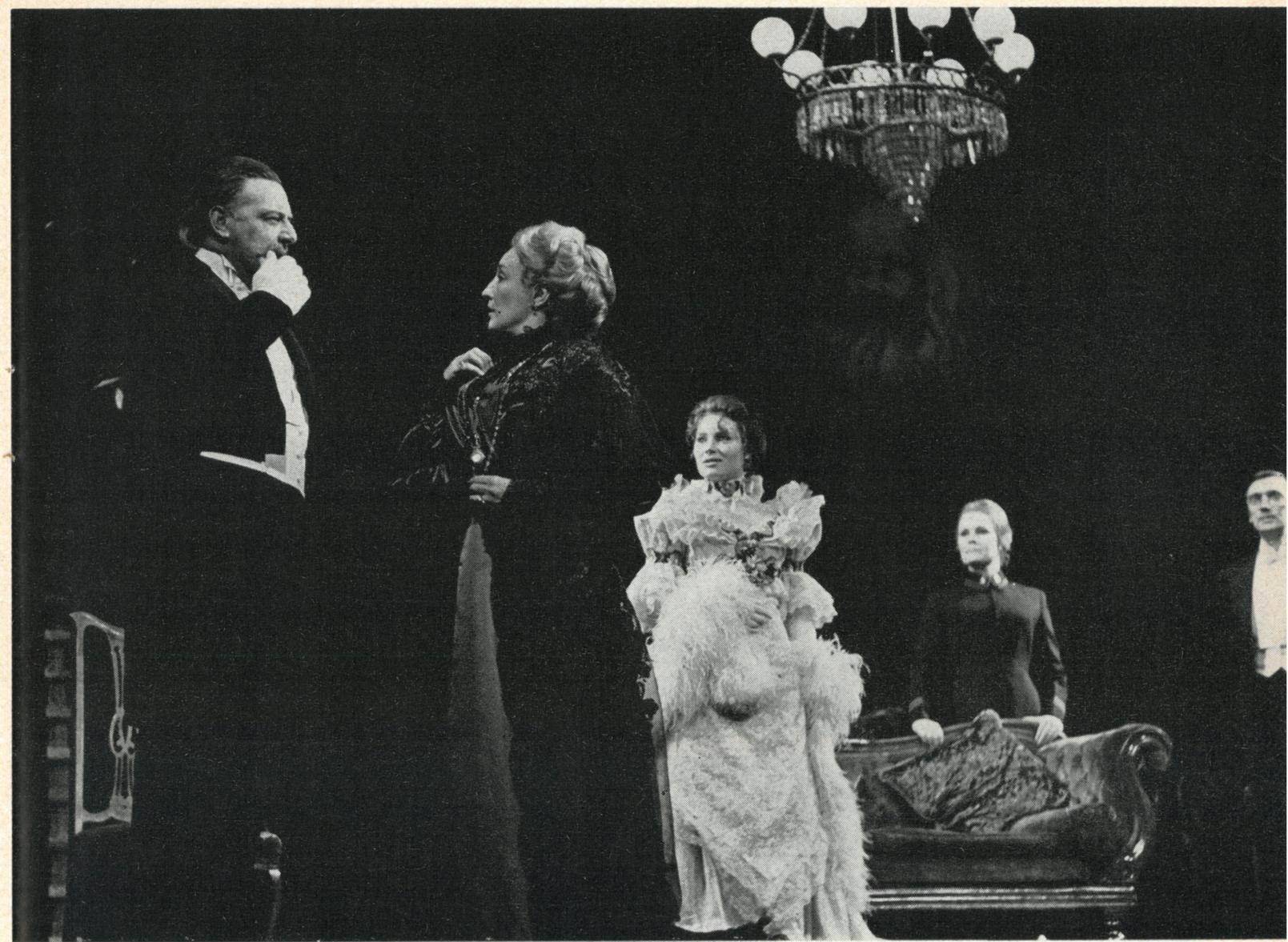
Major Barbara hymns the necessary virtue of money, and castigates the unnecessary vice of poverty. Undershift, the devil's advocate of benevolent capitalism, who builds the new Jerusalem around an armaments empire in a garden city, lists the seven deadly sins as 'food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from man's neck but money, and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted.' Thus, ultimately, Undershift, destroyer of lives, triumphs over the savers of souls. With the loaded dice of Shavian paradox this is accomplished because Undershift is a creator and beneficent distributor of wealth, whilst the Salvationists merely exploit the helplessness of poverty: bread and scrape today to gain eternal jam tomorrow.

First produced in 1905, *Major Barbara* remains a remarkably relevant battle-cry to contemporary barricades. The Undershift motto is 'Nothing is ever done in this world until men are prepared to kill one another if it is not done.' This is the jingoism of revolution; that we must make war in order to make love. It is a far cry from the gradualism of Shaw's Fabian contemporaries, or the ineffectuality of much current youthful protest. In the Preface, Shaw further comments on the deserved powerlessness of society's prisons, punishments and bayonets against the dedicated self-sacrifice of one anarchist acting out of outraged conscience. Shaw's remedy is 'simply not to outrage their consciences'. The play's contemporary aptness leaves one, 65 years on, speculating on Shaw's probable attitudes to student militancy, hi-jacking, and the sale of arms to South Africa. Would Shaw have been another Russell, lifted deferentially from a squat in Whitehall? Or merely another Boss/Brecht manufacturing bon-mots while hippy Plebeians rehearsed their uprising, and his idealised Undershifts showed their feet of clay in the face of Russian naval menace in the Indian Ocean.

As possibly befits both this contemporary relevance and the Royal Shakespeare Company's first Shaw play, Clifford Williams' production gives priority to the words and arguments. He has not been lured into reducing the full-scale of the big Aldwych stage to drawing-room proportions, the normal procedure for productions trying to imply that there is more action going on in a Shaw play than there really is. This principle seems based on the theory that actors doing nothing in a confined space appear busier than actors doing nothing in a large space. And it is interesting to note that Ralph Koltai's set is conceived vertically—actors ascend and descend rather than exit left and right.

The play begins on the large, empty stage beneath a huge banner of Karl Marx—fair warning about the production's prime concern. Stage hands in Edwardian disguise move on the f & f of Lady Britomart's library, mere token furnishings in the large unoccupied areas. The Salvation Army hostel scene is played out in an area vast as an aeroplane hangar. The effect initially seems to dwarf the characters, yet ultimately manages to focus maximum attention on what they are saying. The cast copes magnificently with the wide-open spaces by the uniform excellence of their diction, intelligence and movement.

Brewster Mason's Undershift is a model of intelligent, concise playing. Every seemingly cynical word seems mined and

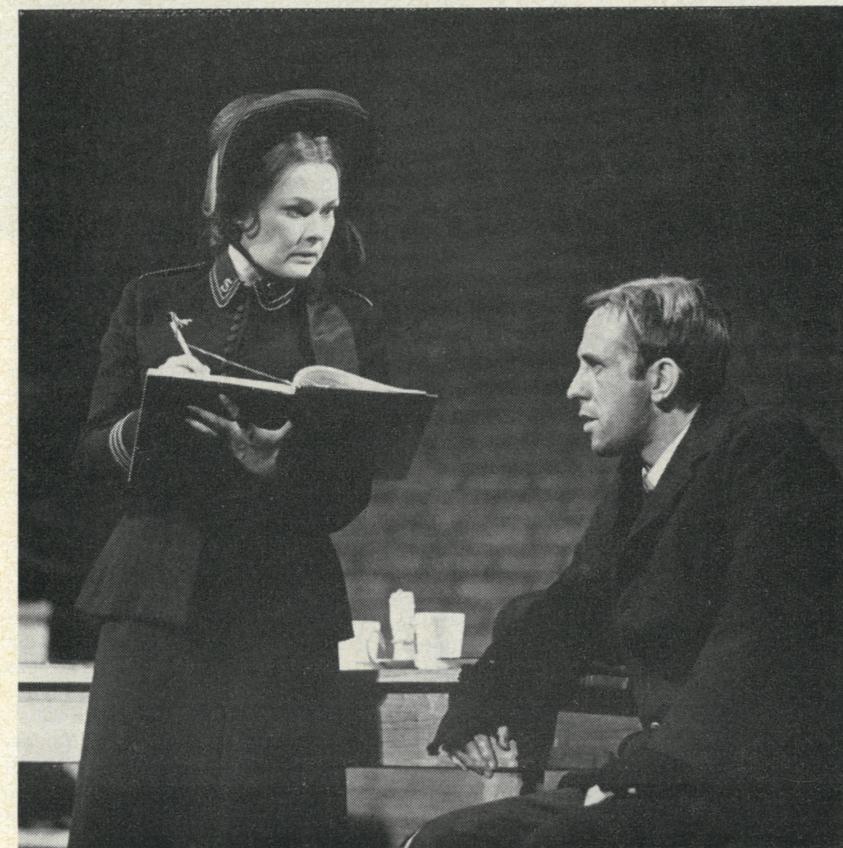
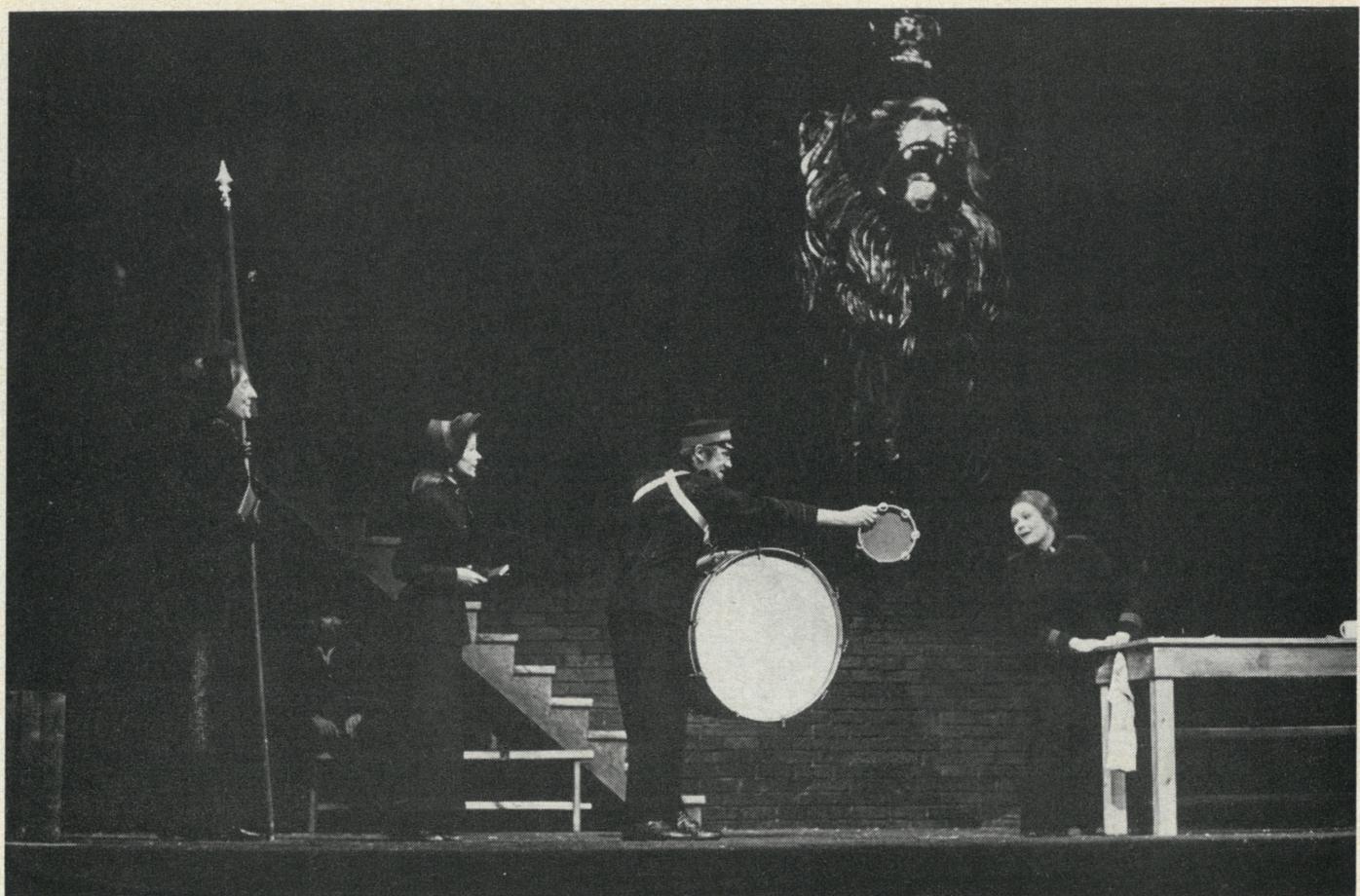


minted from years of hard experience, at the same time advancing heavyweight argument with the agility of a featherweight. Elizabeth Spriggs makes Lady Britomart a sharp-tongued Elizabethan battleaxe without ever descending into caricature. Lady Britomart's barbed intelligence enables her to ask all the questions, while her secure upper-class poise allows her to ignore anybody else's answers. These are two splendidly matching performances at the core of the play, ably abetted by a delightfully spry tour-de-force from Richard Pasco as the intellectually chameleon Adolphus Cusins. Peering quizzically over rimless spectacles, he keeps one constantly guessing whether he is driven from Academia through Salvationism into tycoonery by his search for love, truth or plain intellectual survival. The excellence of these leads is matched by some fine supporting playing from Roger Rees, Michael Gambon, Don Henderson, Milton Johns and Miles Anderson.

Always I come to Shaw's heroines with acute misgivings. Major Barbara herself seems perched uneasily between that awful pertness that Shaw offered as feminism in *Man and Superman* and the lighter comedies, and the almost hockey-playing saintliness that reached its apotheosis in *Saint Joan*. Judi Dench may have seemed the perfect answer to the problem. There has always been an openness and wholesomeness

about her playing that is made dramatic by a quality of vulnerability. As Barbara, however, she tends to emphasise the more embarrassingly self-conscious moments of the Major's missionary zeal. Shaw was fascinated by people who were motivated by passion, especially religious passion. Judi Dench plays Barbara as a tomboy who chose the Church rather than the Hunt, and somewhere the passion and fascination are lost. I would suggest it was more Shaw's fault than Miss Dench's if I did not still have a glowing memory of Wendy Hiller in the old film to make me eat my words.

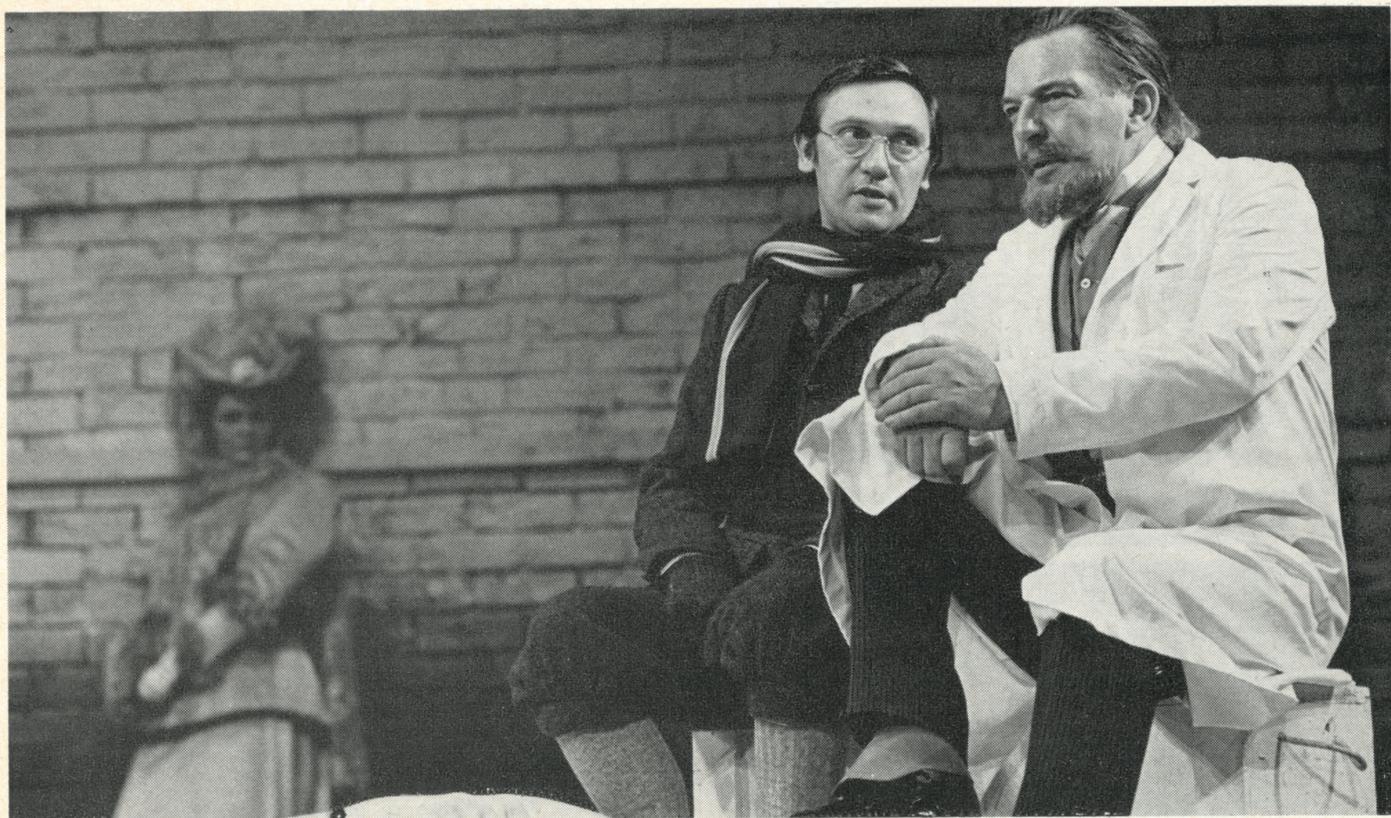
Mr Sammler's critique of rich, radical Mr Shaw ends with 'I have an objection to extended explanations. There are too many. This makes the mental life of mankind ungovernable.... It is not as if I were certain that human beings can be controlled at any level of complexity. I would not swear that mankind was governable.' Sammler is an old-world survivalist who has seen and despaired of the New World. Shaw, for all his anti-religious protest, was a salvationist at heart. He wanted salvation now rather than later—'Let God's work be done for its own sake.' The Aldwych's excellent production gives full measure to Shaw's plea for benevolence and salvation as the worthy end, whatever the means of the revolution that has to come.



Above: Adolphus, with drum, tries to persuade a reluctant Barbara to join a celebration in honour of her father who has just given a generous donation to the Salvation Army

Below: Barbara recruits a new member from the poor, Peter (Milton Johns) into her army

Opposite: The arms factory. Top: Undershaft invites the ex-scholar Adolphus to be his successor as the boss of the factory. Below: Undershaft outlines his cynical policy of overcoming poverty by selling arms as Barbara, having abandoned the Salvation Army, realises she must now fight her father with his own ruthless principles and beliefs



APOLLO

THE WINSLOW BOY

REVIEWER HILARY SPURLING



Catherine Winslow (Annette Crosbie) with Sir Robert Morton (Kenneth More), who successfully defends her naval cadet brother against a wrongful conviction for theft. Miss Winslow's attitude to Sir Robert is hostile till mortifying confidences are made that conclusively prove the man is championing the boy's case from concerned conviction and not as a career-booster

TERENCE RATTIGAN'S old play, *The Winslow Boy* (1946), has now been revived to set beside his new one, *A Bequest to the Nation* (1970) at the Haymarket. Both are choice samples of this playwright's characteristic flavour, which is bland, dry, sweetish, mild but never bitter. Both contain some fine, and even on occasion memorable acting. But of the two *The Winslow Boy*—at any rate for those with only one night to spare for Rattigan—is perhaps the wiser buy.

It comes, for one thing, in a rather more distinguished production; it is probably a better, certainly a crisper play to start with; and it has the great advantage of having been blurred, distanced and generally improved by time so that, nearly a quarter of a century after its first night, one may be fairly sure that *The Winslow Boy* is in its modest way a classic.

Presumably this softening effect is something for which Mr Rattigan has always had a weakness, since both plays are set well back in time from the date of writing. A marked but by no means crudely sentimental nostalgia is his most appealing mood. Both plays are designed to take one back, as Kenneth More (Sir Robert Morton in *The Winslow Boy*) so wisely said on his first night, to the days when one was proud to be an Englishman. Which no doubt accounts for the fact that motives seem to have been purer, emotions simpler, hearts more tender in those days than anything to be found in contemporary home life, either now or in the 'forties. One can't help feeling that things have deteriorated sadly since that olden, golden age, though it is one of Mr Rattigan's chief charms that he completely avoids a plaintive, a complacent or a fulminating tone.

Nonetheless, his pictures of domestic England in 1914 (*The Winslow Boy*) and on the eve of the battle of Trafalgar (*A Bequest to the Nation*) are largely mythical, in the pleasantest possible sense. The coming war in each case casts a shadow—rather agreeable than otherwise—over the proceedings.

Pain and fear are discreetly underplayed in favour of the soothing virtues, courage, loyalty and perseverance in face of frightful odds. Indeed, the main difference seems to be that with the years a twinge of doubt, or perhaps discomfort, has crept over Mr Rattigan: it is noticeable, for instance, that the simple, upright, 'honourable lad' (assigned a key role in each of these two play) is portrayed with considerable more conviction in *The Winslow Boy*.

This lion-hearted stripling is the naval cadet who, wrongfully accused of stealing a five shilling postal order, precipitated a battle (based on the Archer-Shee case) to make the Englishman's home his castle which distracted both the Commons and the nation from what seemed, at the time, a passing spot of bother in the Balkans. (It is, incidentally, another of Mr Rattigan's advantages that he spells out his message so considerately, and repeats it so often, that nobody, not even the densest theatre critic, can fail to make it out.) All concerned behave impeccably—save only the cad who jilts Miss Winslow, but then anyone with half an eye might have seen from the start that he was up to no good.

The play seems throughout to have been constructed for the especial benefit of people with half eyes: that is to say it moves in slow, clear, well-signposted stages, always smooth, seldom if ever startling. And, given the simplicity of this plot and the elementary development of the characters, it is a tribute to Frith Banbury's direction that one believes implicitly in the existence of the Winslow household, from disturbances heard but not seen on the nursery floor to the invisible cook in the kitchen. This is the kind of directing which consists in bringing out the best in a fine cast and simultaneously thickening the play, as one



The nation's press becomes fascinated by a father's single-minded efforts to risk his family's savings and the opportunities of his other two children to clear the name of his youngest child. Above: father and son (Laurence Naismith and Steven Pacey) pose for a newspaper photographer (Michael Haughey) watched by a woman journalist (Rosamund Greenwood) and the boy's mother (Megs Jenkins, far right)

might bind a thin sauce, with unobtrusive, indeed barely perceptible, atmospheric flavours. It is uncommonly well done, and it rises in the proposal scene to a density positively Chekhovian: Peter Cellier, as Miss Winslow's glum, stout, shrewd and wretchedly shy lover, combines more than a touch of Yefikhodov with the misery of Lopakhin, closeted with Varya in a similarly hopeless situation, at the end of *The Cherry Orchard*.

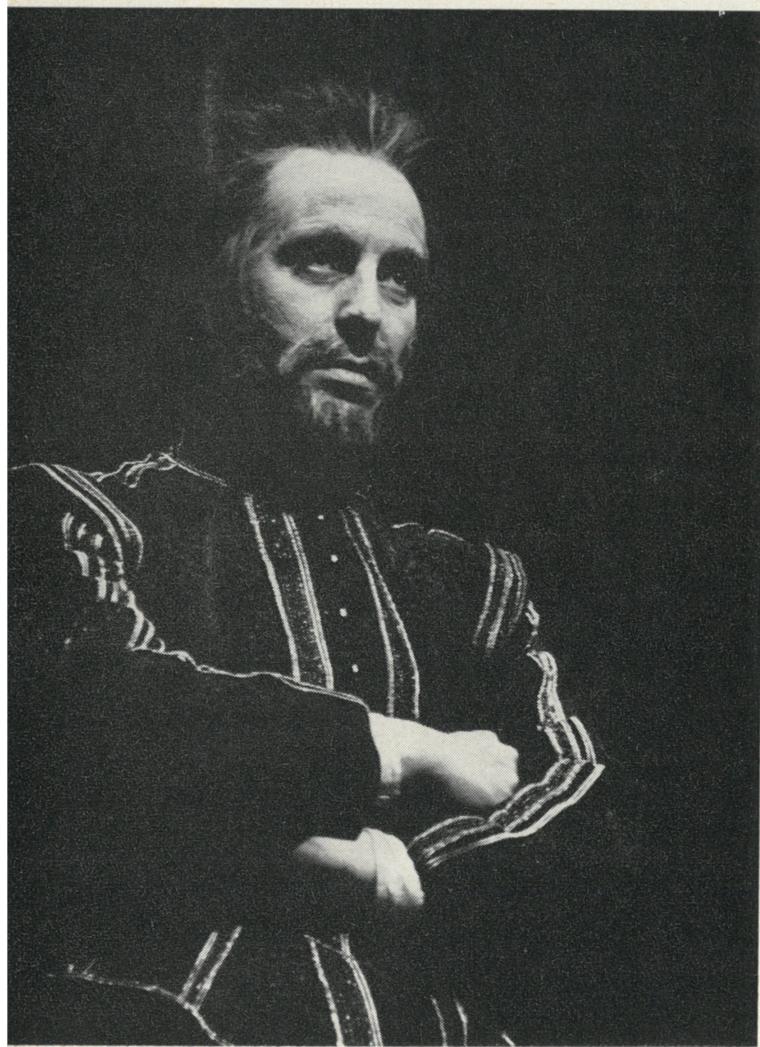
Kenneth More's Morton is a formidable and richly humorous

performance, which makes it sad that all his best scenes—sensational *coups de théâtre* in the courtroom and the Commons—take place off stage. Laurence Naismith and Megs Jenkins are admirable as Winslow *père* and *mère*, and Peter Gale's bunny-hug (a weird and charming antique dance by the gayest of the Winslows) is a sight not easily forgotten. The play is fetchingly designed by Reece Pemberton and marks, I daresay, the first flower of a wholesale Rattigan revival.

STRATFORD

THE TEMPEST

REVIEWER HELEN DAWSON



Above: Ian Richardson as Prospero
Opposite page: the shipwreck scene, at the beginning of the play, showing Christopher Morley's long, rectangular set design with its white ceiling, representing a sail, swooping down towards the stage

THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE wound up its 1970 Stratford season with John Barton's production of *The Tempest*, in which he was helped by Robin Phillips. As Shakespeare's probable last play, it's odd that the company didn't do it last season, along with *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*; as it is, it seems slightly adrift, directed without any particular viewpoint, very much keeping its secrets and enigmas to itself. And, as a result, though the play's mystery increases, its dramatic reverberations don't.

Thing weren't helped much on the first night by a full fifteen minutes of electronic bleeping before the opening scene, which sounded a bit like a tap dripping but which could have been meant to represent a heart beating. I still can't work out the relevance to the rest of the evening but, maddeningly, it set one on the track of clues—none of which seemed to be subsequently realised. The set itself is a long, rectangular box, with sea-green walls and a steeply exaggerated, deepening perspective, which worked well for Prospero's cell, but was useless in conveying any atmosphere for the rest of the island.

The set was used inventively, however, for the shipwreck; as the white ceiling swooped down towards the stage, there was an alarming illusion, accompanied by explosions and human shrieks, of a great sail going out of control. But the next scene set the pace for what was to follow: an impeccably clear, sluggishly moving, severe and stolid narration as Prospero tells Miranda of her origins and the disaster which befell them when he lost Milan to his usurping brother.

This approach almost seems like a directorial determination not to elaborate, not to give anything away, which may be perfectly satisfactory for a reading of this particular play, but is disappointingly limp on stage. An audience coming away from *The Tempest* wants to feel that some attitude has been taken to it, even if—like Jonathan Miller's colonisation version at the Mermaid recently—it's one with which they disagree. Barton hardly attempts to dramatise the mirror-opposites—good and evil, reward and punishment, air and earth—except in their most obvious terms as, for instance, Ariel as a naked castrato (except for a generous sprinkling of white powder, a mane of long hair and a neat little cache-sexe), contrasted with a hefty Caliban, exuding disease.

Nor is there any exceptional intellectual illumination—as one was, quite reasonably, expecting from Barton—on the relationship of man to nature, of man's earthly condition and his grasp and conception of the divine, or of the limits of his power for good and love. As a result, the final scene at Stratford is more down-beat and puzzling than perhaps even Shakespeare intended when, in losing his magic powers, Prospero also loses his daughter for a kingdom he no longer really wants.

It is a tribute to Ian Richardson that, within the context of the production, the force of this last scene comes across as conclusively and powerfully as it does. In an almost unactable part, or as Richardson himself described it in *The Times*, 'a bitch', he does, even within the short time space of three hours which Shakespeare (at least on a naturalistic level) imposed, give an all-round picture of the man. Not only can one visualise him as the young ruler of Milan, taking his duties seriously, feeling almost smug at the devotion from his subjects, but one has some idea, too, of the changes which that strange life on the island made in him. A man who has experienced both temporal and spiritual power and found both, in their isolation from the common world, unsatisfactory.

In its quiet, slow way, this is one of Richardson's best performances. His Prospero is younger than usual (which is consistent with Miranda as 15 and their 12 years of exile), and is rooted in a cold dignity; he can witness the warmth



which others have in their relationships, but he cannot experience it for himself. Thus he loves and wants to protect Miranda because she is his daughter and he is a dutiful father, but he can never be close in heart to her and she will never understand him. Ariel may be more than a servant but he will never be a friend and he causes Prospero to barely suppress the irritation he inevitably feels with others and which he unleashes fully and unfairly on Caliban. Neither politics nor magic, you feel with this Prospero, can bring him happiness or fulfilment; he will always be solitary.

Unfortunately, it's not only this interpretation which makes Richardson's performance stand apart. The supporting performances are, on the whole, less than strong. Barry Stanton's Caliban is promising, decked out like a moving dung heap, with a useless leg and an unformed arm, eating raw fish and spitting it out at Miranda, scratching his privates when he describes her to Stephano, doing fat somersaults across the stage to celebrate his new 'freedom'—before another rope is lashed round his neck. Philip Locke makes an impressive Gonzalo

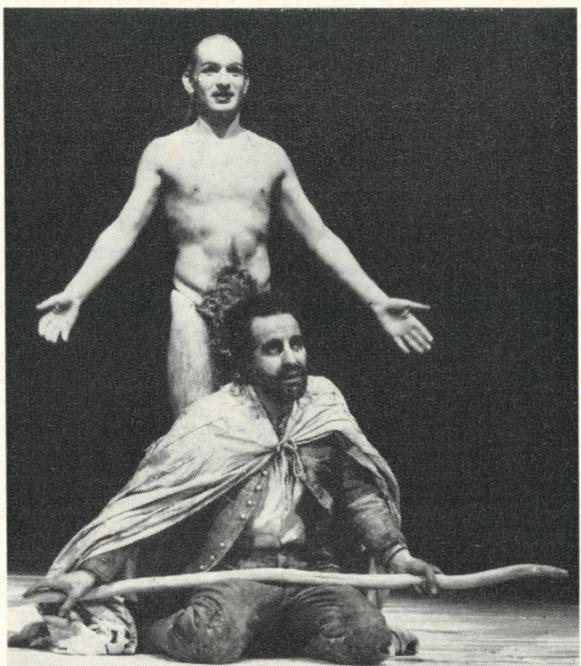
and Ben Kingsley's Ariel, though his hum is a bit monotonous, is brave and interesting. Norman Rodway as Trinculo and Patrick Stewart as Stephano make rather heavy weather of the comedy, but I suppose that's not entirely their fault. Estelle Kohler's Miranda created only a flimsy impression and Christopher Gable's Ferdinand is best forgotten.

Far more memorable are the songs, music and the sci-fi noises with which the island abounds. These are steely, extra-terrestrial and consistent with the stark, not quite earthly setting. Otherwise, the production is full of rather unnerving invention: the spirits' banquet was represented by what looked like luminous tea-cosies, which later went pop, and the 'majestic vision' of Ceres and her gang consisted of three near naked gentlemen, in semi-darkness, with tinsel headgear, who looked as though they had come down from the front of Selfridges on the night before Christmas. And I can't imagine how Sebastian and Antonio found time to dry out their pipe tobacco after the storm in order to have a good smoke while plotting their dirty deeds.





Left: Prospero with Miranda (Estelle Kohler)
Above: the comics—Trinculo (Norman Rodway), Stephano
(Patrick Stewart) and Caliban (Barry Stanton)
Below: Ariel (Ben Kingsley) attends on Prospero



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CAMBRIDGE

CYRANO

REVIEWER MICHAEL BILLINGTON



THERE SEEMS TO ME two good reasons for reviving Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Either one's company contains one of those rare actors who combine the comic and heroic instinct in equal proportions (in other words, a younger Olivier or Richardson) or one has discovered a way of rendering in English what Henry James described as Rostand's 'merciless virtuosity of expression'. Worthy as this National Theatre production is it fulfils neither of these conditions. Edward Woodward, a fine actor but a born quietist, is not one of nature's Cyranos; and Patrick Garland's adaptation, for all its importation of verses from Herrick, never rises to the challenge of Rostand's swinging and exuberant alexandrines.

When the play was written in 1897, it must have seemed like a gauntlet flung down to challenge the prevailing naturalistic style. Ever since Zola's adaptation of *Thérèse Raquin* in 1873 ('I defy the last of the Romanticists to put on the stage a heroic drama,' he wrote in the prefatory manifesto) the Naturalists had been in the ascendant: it was the period of Ibsen, of Strindberg, of Becque, of the foundation of the Théâtre Libre by André Antoine. And then along came the 29-year-old Rostand with a five-act tragic-comedy that to a French audience would have evoked memories of Gautier, Hugo and Dumas; written moreover in a springy, word-spinning, image-packed verse that made no attempt to reproduce ordinary speech. As Max Beerbohm said when the play first came to London: 'To translate it into English were a terrible imposition to set anyone and not even the worst offender in literature deserves such a punishment.'

In a programme note, Patrick Garland nominates Christopher Fry as Rostand's only possible successor; and it might have been interesting to see how he would have coped with his unceasing verbal virtuosity. The trouble with Mr Garland's attempt is that it lacks any consistency of style. At one moment it will aim for a florid poeticism: unless I misheard, someone's eyes were fancifully said to be 'sweeping the ground like an elegant curtsey'. At another, it will be punningly prosaically jocular—'Do you find something unsatisfactory about my olfactory organ?' enquires Cyrano archly. And when the hero slyly warns Ragueneau's wife not to meddle with her madeleine, we seem to have descended to the level of *Carry On Cyrano*. For all their occasional absurdities, at least the earlier versions by Humbert Wolfe and Brian Hooker chose one particular style and stuck to it with rigorous consistency.

Mr Garland's production shows a similar stylistic uncertainty. Thus the first scene in the Hotel de Bourgogne, with its tumult of poets and actors, bourgeois and acrobats, should convey a tremendous sense of seething activity; but Mr Garland simply gives Cyrano the centre of the stage and forces everyone else to sit round in a polite semi-circle as if attending a convention of tailors' dummies. However, when it comes to the Siege of Arras, Mr Garland gives us heavy cannon, endless smoke and noise and a stage picture that might be a canvas by Géricault or, at the very least, a still from Bondarchuk's *Waterloo*. Throughout the production there is a constant battle between the real and the artificial and one is never quite sure which side is winning.

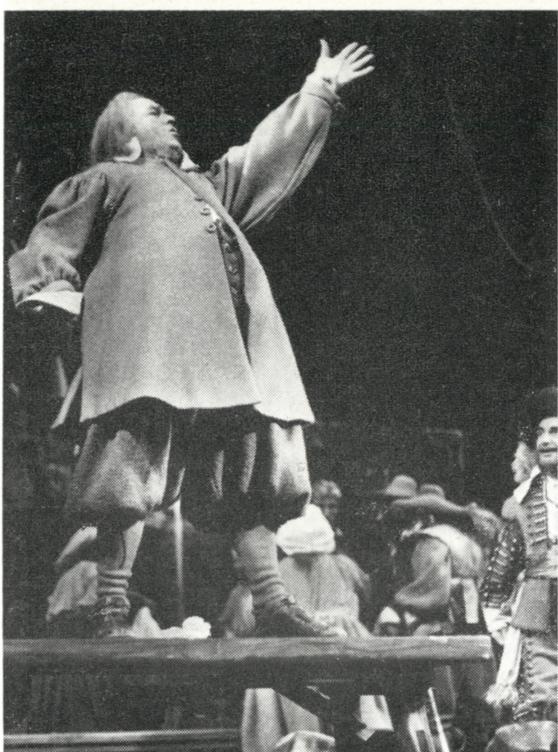
The trouble is, I suspect, that Mr Garland is not oversympathetic to the play's combination of swagger and fustian and that he has therefore tried to go for what he regards as its kernel of emotional truth: Cyrano's enduring love for Roxane and his heroic gesture of self-sacrifice in helping Christian to woo her. Unfortunately, though, it's the work's very staginess and artificiality that makes it such a joy. For instance, there's a famous episode in the first act where Cyrano composes a ballade while fighting a duel with an arrogant count. Here the ballade becomes a sonnet—fair enough—but the emphasis is on the difficulty of trying to compose verse while you're actually in the process of killing somebody. What should be a moment of high comedy is thus sacrificed for a piece of misplaced realism. In the end the production has little *raison d'être*: if you don't really believe in the values and stylistic flourishes of nineteenth century heroic comedy, why bother to resurrect it?

Not surprisingly, Edward Woodward's Cyrano reflects the production's basic uncertainty: the character becomes a moody intro-

Edward Woodward as Cyrano with the adored Roxane played by Anna Cartaret



Above: the opening scene in which the theatricals of the commedia dell'arte intertwines with the drama of life when Cyrano fights a duel provoked by a nobleman's unwise mocking of the poet's king-sized nose. Left: Raguneau, the pastry cook poet (Gerald James) versifies as Cyrano prepares for an assignation with Roxane who is to break his heart by confiding that she has fallen in love with the soldier, Christian



vert with a hangup about his appearance rather than the dashing, lunatic versifier of Rostand's original. The pathos of the part is all there but not its panache; and, from my seat in the Dress Circle, I had the impression that Mr Woodward may have been acting beautifully in close-up but that not enough was coming across. Admittedly, Anna Carteret as Roxane established the character's progression from vain girl to mature woman with considerable clarity, both Charles Kay as the sardonic Comte de Guiche and Anthony Nicholls as the loyal Le Bret lent reliable support; and Carl Toms' operatic sets sumptuously proved that the Cambridge Theatre doesn't consider itself a smokeless zone.

All the same this production isn't really up to the desired National standard: when the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park (not to mention BBC Television) can mount an infinitely livelier and more vivacious version of Rostand's epic than one of our great ensembles, something is clearly amiss.

At the front, Cyrano continues to woo Roxane on Christian's behalf. But instead of acting as prompter under her balcony, he now writes love letters for Christian, who is about to lose his life on the battlefield





Vivat! Vivat Regina!

Piccadilly

Reviewer John Russell Taylor

I REMEMBER once, some years ago, seeing the film versions of two of Maxwell Anderson's well-upholstered historical dramas, *Mary of Scotland* and *Elizabeth and Essex*, together in one evening. Robert Bolt's new play is a bit like that, and one comes out with much the same final impressions. Admittedly *Essex* is not featured in the parts of the play devoted to Elizabeth (Leicester is the only lover around this stage), but otherwise the comparison is complete, even to the disparity of interest between the two characters. Elizabeth, of course, is a gift to dramatist and actress alike: her intelligence, her force, her sexual mystery, all go readily to the portrayal of, at the least, a great and glorious bitch. Mary, on the other hand, is a problem. Mr Bolt does not seek to whitewash her quite so much as Anderson did, but he does not, either, manage to hit on perhaps the only way that Mary Queen of Scots can be made into an interesting and convincing dramatic figure: by making her much more of a villainess, a conniving, ruthless, and very sexy young woman who will stop at nothing to get what she wants—even the murder of her useless husband. Mr Bolt's Mary is no plaster saint, but he stops short of full incrimination.

All this, of course, has little or nothing to do with the history of the thing. For all I know (for all anyone knows) Mary may have been a much wronged innocent, but in drama that just will not work. Probably, too, Mr Bolt baulked at having two queen bitches in one play—especially since they would have to pursue their ways separately, as the historical queens never met face to face. And what would be the point of setting up two evenly matched adversaries if the *scene à faire*, their final confrontation, remains stubbornly *infaisable*? True enough, but as it stands the play suffers from a chronic imbalance of dramatic interest. Mary Queen of Scots is unmistakably the heroine and principal character: the play takes its shape from her story. Elizabeth, though her role is showy enough, remains essentially a bystander, commentator on, and occasionally interferer in, Mary's affairs. And yet, though the play is never (despite its considerable length) actually

dull, there is no denying that when Mary is on stage we rapidly begin to look forward eagerly to the return of Elizabeth.

This may have something to do with the casting. Eileen Atkins is superb as Elizabeth: she looks marvellous, and says the lines in such a way that one can accept them as new-forged that instant in the furnaces of Elizabeth's mind. In comparison Sarah Miles is undeniably lightweight. Which is not necessarily to say that she is wrong in the role of Mary: she matches admirably Mr Bolt's conception, which is that of a little (actually Mary was nearly six feet tall), sharp, bright, jewel-like creature, very feminine, very unpredictable in her fluctuations between stubbornness and impressibility. Even her occasional shrillness when trying to assert queenly authority can be made to fit in. But it leaves the play terribly lop-sided. Nor, can it be said in all honesty, does Peter Dews' production do much to right matters. The two leading ladies apart, the acting is signally lacklustre, with one exception, Richard Pearson. And he, alas, appears in the Elizabeth half of the play, as Cecil. The spiky relationship between Cecil and his queen is the best thing in the play, and as embodied by Eileen Atkins and Richard Pearson a constant joy to watch. For the rest of the time there are too many passages where one finds oneself drifting into reverie, and wondering, maybe, who will be most likely casting for the film version which is surely bound to follow.

Forward Up Your End

Stratford East

Reviewer Robert Cushman

I ONCE SAW Brendan Behan's lesser plays described as 'honest rubbish', and the same tolerant description will have to serve for Joan Littlewood's return to their common stamping-ground. But it is just as well that I am feeling tolerant.

Kenneth Hill's *Forward Up Your End* seems to have been planned as a scathing satire on the workings of bureaucracy in Birmingham, though the last two words have little relevance to what goes on in Stratford East. There is hardly a Midland accent to be heard. And yet the show will never quite give in and admit that we are really in Theatre Workshop's own loved and familiar never-never land. Somewhere in its displaced refugee heart it nourishes delusions of local relevance. Miss Littlewood has not expunged them, though she may well have seen through them.

But if Birmingham in Miss Littlewood's dispensation is nowhere, bureaucracy is obviously very much on her mind, and Mr Hill's greedy and incompetent assortment of local governors are so many gifts

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Cyrano's last stand—after visiting Roxane in her convent retreat regularly for fifteen years Bergerac breathes his last in its snow-covered courtyard

to her. But at this point her kind-heartedness intervenes and undoes her. At first glance the show appears to be outrageously one-sided; the authorities are a set of venal buffoons, waxing fat at the expense of the poor and homeless. This of course is merely to tell it like it is, and for a moment one suspects that, for the first time since Joseph Heller wrote *Catch-22* the forces that misshape our lives have been nailed with the cold fury they deserve. But, wouldn't you know, they all turn out to be lovable.

Perhaps it is unfair to refer back to *Oh! What a Lovely War*, but since that production changed my life I can hardly avoid doing so. Anyway, it was canny enough not to allow its villains to ingratiate themselves by bursting into song. But in *Forward Up Your End* they do it all the time.

Confusion is worse confounded by Mr Hill's protagonist whose personality is, to put it mildly, ill-defined. The proceedings are so ramshackle that it takes some time to tumble to the fact that he is the protagonist, and even longer to realise that his tale is in part a love-story. (The first duet comes as a great surprise.) Peering through the undergrowth of script and production one can perceive him stumbling from promotion to promotion, a living demonstration of the proposition (a dubious one to my mind) that nothing succeeds like good-natured inadequacy. No thrusting Machiavell he. Just the same, come-uppance awaits him and hankering for the girl he left behind him does no good at all.

Peter Armitage bears with fortitude, and a good deal of skill, the burden of shifting from satirical butt to romantic lead and back again, and he has a pleasant way with the songs, most of which are agreeable enough in a fiftyish Tin Pan Alley way. The girls, as usual with Theatre Workshop, are a delight, doing full justice to somebody's enthusiastic line about the superior merits of Brummie tarts. But the men are often engulfed by the general jokiness; of dialogue suggesting a Goon Show played back at half-speed and direction too often to match. Bill Wallis indeed does a great bit of Major Bloodnocking as an MI 5 man whose inquisition of our hero ('Are you a homosexual?' 'No.' 'Well that's a pity, because I am') has a crazy panache which threatens to lift the evening right out of its rut.

experimental basement or cellar with no fixed seating arrangements, makes boldly for the most exposed and dangerous place he can find in the front row—there ready to withstand the most direct assaults upon his political apathy, and greet every invitation to improvise, strip, or just dance with nonchalant disinterest and ease.

If, on the other hand, you apply my very different strategy of locating the most anonymous and unassailable seat in the whole auditorium—eyeing each and every member of the public and theatre staff as a possible plant or threat to your well-being—you would have been highly relieved by the opening sketch of the Scaffold's revue *Stuff* which ran for an entertaining fortnight at the Open Space last month.

The beginning was ominous enough—a red spotlight focused upon an *Oh! Calcutta!*-type orgy taking place in front of a white wall. Immediately a balding rain-coated Northerner emerged from the row in front of me to register a protest. He had come to entertain us in another fashion and proceeded to engage the entire audience in a rousing chorus of 'Pack Up Your Troubles'. The delighted response to this began to confirm my suspicion that most theatregoers are introverts rather than extroverts—preferring a relatively passive sing-song to an actual engagement in a production.

The scene was London 1975, and Ken Tynan had become the official censor, decreeing (one relishes the prospect of that week's letters to *The Times*) that every stage production must contain at least one act of copulation. Our Northerner was thus an outlaw of the permissive society, fleeing from the secret sexual police and holding forbidden music-hall meetings in various underground establishments. The Scaffold then showed us some of the exploits of the Northerner in the new world—an ugly, beaked-nosed man adrift in a society of beautiful people. His career began at a bloodthirsty public school where a crush on the cricket bat-wielding head boy terminated as the latter announced to his innocent protégé that he had a sudden hankering for 'a nice cup of tea and a fag'. The story ended pathetically with the middle-aged man's suicide in a gas oven—next to which lay an open suitcase stuffed with panties and girlie magazines.

In between we were offered some glimpses of the influence of de Sade upon a wife-swapping working class couple, a wedding hymn entitled 'Bless, ah bless the act of love' delivered as a pub-crawling imitation of a revivalist meeting, and several sourly romantic songs sung in a bitter-sweet vein by talented Polly James.

My reservations about the show lay in the lack of consistency and courage in following through the original thesis about permissiveness as a kind of seventies opium of the people—and the aura of sentimentality which hung hazily over the whole proceedings. This was especially distracting in the suicide scene as the audience had to step over the dead body in order to leave the theatre, creating a

situation of embarrassment rather than of shock. Even so the sixty interesting minutes of *Stuff* had offered plenty for both *Calcutta* fans and their Dowager detractors to think (or to sing) about.

Lie Down I Think I Love You

Strand

Reviewer Robert Cushman

THE INCOMPARABLE film critic Pauline Kael has observed that the idea of musicals is often easier to love than the things themselves. And indeed, as I reflect on some of my dire experiences of the last few years, I fall to wondering on what my enthusiasm for the form can possibly have been based. This last month has shaken me still further. *Forward Up Your End* was bad enough but I might have been kinder to it had I known then what I know now. What I know now is *Lie Down I Think I Love You*, which is no kind of thing to throw at a man who has just learned that he won't be having *Guys and Dolls* for Christmas.

Lie Down, which lasted just over a week, was a youth musical, and this was perhaps the most disheartening thing about it. For it was no odious piece of middle-aged band wagoning. Its author/composer Ceredig Davies is a genuine post-war kid, and though the hallowed names of Hutchinson Scott and Michael Northen appeared in the programme it was possible to regard them merely as good uncles on the sidelines. And still the atmosphere on stage was oppressively third-hand, as of someone who'd read about student protest, seen *Hair*, and decided that here were the ingredients for a new show. The result, of course, is that it's already a then show.

It dealt with a country girl who came to London to see her brother and found him presiding over a houseful of semi-dropouts, all obsessed or at any rate mildly preoccupied with the desire to protest. (There'd been some trouble at art school but this was alluded to very much in passing; the fact of cliché rather than its motivation was the main concern.) Their chosen method was the planting of a bomb on the roof of Broadcasting House. Innocuous but loud. But who will bell the cat? Nobody but big brother Tom, buoyed up on a wave of bitterness caused by his sister's appropriation of his boyfriend. (The author was so determined to be cool about this that he neglected to characterise the lad on the turn.) Nobody noticed, however, and broadcasting continued unchanged. Understandably depressed by this the cast filed off into the wings and on this highly effective dying fall the proceedings closed.

At least, it was highly effective by comparison with what had gone before. It

Stuff

Open Space

Reviewer Peter Ansorge

VISITING the slightly cramped open spaces of London's avant-garde is a little like switching on the news—one has to be prepared for anything. I am in constant admiration, for instance, of the kind of extrovert customer who, upon entering an

also compelled one to reconsider what had gone before. To judge from the ending, Mr Davies has no great opinion of his own generation whom he sees as doomed romantics, crushed equally by their own inertia and the monolithic impassivity of the system. This would explain the aimlessness of their dialogue, the tedious whimsy of their lyrics (influenced by Leonard Cohen, says Mr Hobson, and he may well be right) and the crushing monotony of their music. It would explain them but it would not make them any more entertaining. A musical of all forms must be enjoyed for the passing moment.

Besides I'm far from certain of Mr Davies' purpose. He may very well have believed all the earlier cant about love, joy and gentleness, or at least believed that it was what audiences are swallowing these days. The one element he omitted was the anarchic wit. You might anticipate, from the title of the show, that its mood would be one of off-hand funniness. But when that title line finally materialised it was part of a primly presented orgy that might have been sub-titled 'Flee from the wrath to come'.

The cast behaved well throughout, though one of the girls sounded forgivingly uptight about the whole thing. Ray Brooks gave Tom the right air of easy command, and though nobody seemed happy about the mikes they were periodically required to grab from nowhere in particular, their singing was generally all right. It would be interesting to know how much of the dialogue was improvised; a suspicious number of them began 'Look' or 'Frankly'. Most of the real action took place on film, perhaps because it was considered too complicated to enact on stage with any degree of realism. Old-fashioned musicals used to tackle this problem with a device they called choreography, but technology marches on.

Down The Arches

Greenwich

Reviewer Michael Billington

THE MUSICAL DOCUMENTARY—pioneered by Joan Littlewood in Stratford, Peter Cheeseman in Stoke and Charles Chilton in radio—was one of the most impressive theatrical legacies of the 'Sixties; and, on the latest evidence, the form is far from exhausted. In the last month or so I've seen a raucous, cynical history of Derby County Football Club staged in the local Playhouse and a tuneful, partisan account of the career of Jack and Bessie Bradock up at the Everyman, Liverpool. Now this lively local theatre weighs in with a pungent vaudeville history of the building of the London and Greenwich Railway in the 1930s.

The virtues of the musical documentary

are by now pretty apparent. A good deal of hard fact can be conveyed in the guise of straightforward entertainment; popular song can be used to evoke period atmosphere; and the form is loose enough for some kind of editorial comment to be implicit throughout. The only snag is that there is quite often more music than documentation and so whole tracts of English social history become overlaid with a slightly factitious gaiety.

This particular show, written and directed by Ewan Hooper and researched by Nick McCarty, isn't entirely free from the last-named fault: even hardworking railwaymen and penurious South-East Londoners deprived of their homes by the march of progress seem to have the strength left for an occasional knees-up. But, on the whole, the show describes, with economy and understanding, the collapse of a magnificent dream. Conceived in 1831, the Railway was intended to stretch to Dover and become not only the gateway to the Continent but also the Appian Way of the British Empire. Underneath the arches were to be shaded walks, tree-lined boulevards and fine town houses. In the event, the money ran short, the boulevards never got off the drawing-board and the supposedly fine houses became instant slums complete with permanent damp, gas fumes and shuddering walls.

In recounting the battle between the railway speculators and the Greenwich preservationists, Mr Hooper stays obstin-

ately neutral: rightly he saves his compassion for the poor people kicked out of their homes at the shortest of notice by the unstoppable engineers. But I do wish he'd given us a bit more solid fact. I'd like to have known, for instance, more about the working conditions of the railway company's employees. Just how much did they earn, how many hours a day did they work and what became of them during the Company's financial vicissitudes? In short, I could have done with more matter and less heart.

However the show has enormous vitality, presents us with a splendid gallery of local eccentrics (including a mercenary vicar who combines his pastoral duties with running a steam laundry on the Isle of Dogs) and has an obvious relevance to the problems involved in building a motorway round modern London. It also blends traditional British Railway songs and modern ballads with some skill: one number in particular, reminding us that behind every successful dreamer there's a despised little man worrying about money, has an economic veracity and Brechtian rigour that I would like to have seen exploited more often.

From the small, energetic cast, I would briefly single out Sally Mates as an ebullient tart, Bill Stewart as a self-deceiving speculator and Derek Griffiths as a volatile engine-driver. They help to make this one of the brightest and sharpest evenings Greenwich has given us so far.

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LUNCH & LATE NIGHT LINE-UP

NIGEL ANDREWS

ARISTOTLE, as we all learned at school, considered the feature of tragedy the ability to excite pity and fear, and even the most 'elevated' tragic plays cannot entirely disown such poor relations as the tear-jerker and the horror film. Writers may croon idealistically about tragedy as purifying or ennobling, but it all comes down to an audience wanting to be thoroughly churned up by what it has seen in its regulation two and a half hours. No ambitious playwright can afford to neglect the streak of masochism in theatregoers, concealing behind their dinner jackets an almost primitive appetite for blood and tears. Strong reactions are after all the only gauge of an audience's attention. In a comedy the assurance comes from laughs, but in a melodrama you cannot expect such frequency in the way of gasps, groans or stifled lamentations. Prolonged silence is the general rule, and a trained ear must distinguish between the enthralled stillness and the coma of utter boredom.

Such criteria, I hoped, would stand me in good stead for a month's theatre in which melodrama seemed the chief ingredient. There is a caution though. Not only do audiences often fail to conform with such textbook psychological patterns, but audience reaction (with one exception) tended to take second place once the curtain was up. It's hard enough trying to watch some plays, without taking a file on the audience at the same time.

The one exception was the double-bill at the ICA, Ambiance's latest addition to their season of Black and White Power plays. In these two plays the audience is so well exercised that its reactions are a shaping part of the performance itself. A rock band on stage kept up a blaring rhythm throughout Ed Bullins' *It Bees Dat Way*, while down on audience-level a group of six negroes, three men, three girls, rampaged round a dimly-lit lamp-post. Lined up round three walls, we were in turn abused, propositioned and relieved of our wallets and ties. Only a few, alas, reacted with the indignation required, the rest of us poor white trash felt suitably cowed and embarrassed. As an exercise in Total Theatre, juddering lights and all, the impact is as effective and savagely intimidating as Bullins must have hoped, but it seems half-way to a Theatre of Fascism ripe for abuse.

Nursing our bruised egos we retreated to the exit door at half-time only to be met by three police officers who promptly issued us with helmets, uniforms and handcuffs. Herded back for the second play, Victor Corty's *Arrest*, we found the 'author', a young Negro, already bedded

with his white girl friend and outraged at our intrusion. In the course of thirty minutes' cross-examination about his play, he is hectored, vilified, tied up, beaten and finally gunned down by the police, while his girl friend, after having a packet of cannabis planted on her, is taken offstage and flogged. The audience, not to be left out, were cross-questioned by both police ('Have you ever seen a more obscene play?') and victim ('Have you written to *The Times* about the black man's fate?'). Honest replies were invited, but answers were incoherent or evasively liberal. In a sense, Corty's play, however wholeheartedly argued (and stunningly acted by Norman Beaton), only proved the danger of allowing its audience loopholes. *It Bees Dat Way* at least had the courage of its terrorism, and the realisation that when sweet reason fails sheer violence is the only resort.

The audience for Richard Metallus' double-bill *Shack-Shack* (Obvi Theatre at the Arts) filed out at the end in near-silence. But it looked like the comatose rather than the enthralled variety. The first play, *Sit Quietly on the Baulk*, is set on a moonlit wharf where a young negro is contemplating suicide, but holds back in the fear that there may be restricted immigration in Heaven. A girl comes in to drown her baby, but after hurling it into the water is confronted by the negro and told his problem. Portia-style, the girl pleads his cause to the Angels ('In this courthouse called Life, innocence is no excuse to the law'). Thus encouraged, the negro flings himself into the water—only to emerge, after a soulful soliloquy from the girl, dripping wet and clutching the (still-alive) baby. Already tenuous in its grip on reality, the play finally peters out in a mock-Pirandello flourish (the girl, not knowing how to end the play, stalks off through the auditorium), and, despite strong performances from Rick James and Chrissie Shrimpton, the final impact seems as fey and artificial as the plot-line suggests. It is, to be charitable, Metallus' first play.

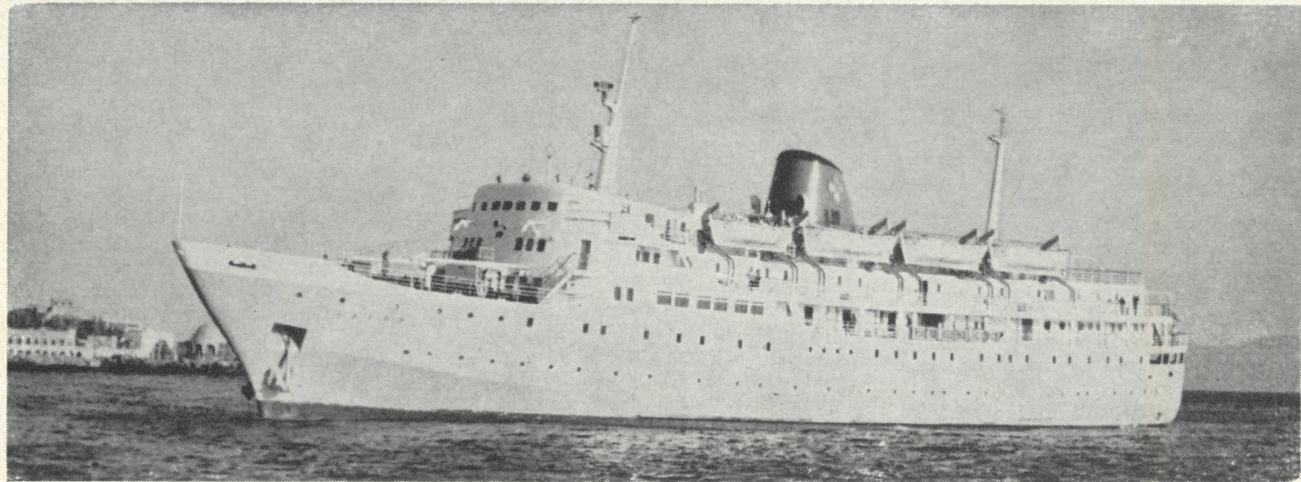
Shack-Shack is his second. A negro revolutionary, Blue Eyes, holds a Tottenham Court Road bookseller at gunpoint. Says the blurb, it 'has a more biting theme, and so shows the broad scope of the author's abilities'. Well, to my jaded eyes it looked the mixture as before. Once again the play abounds in recriminations, revelations and the occasional statement about Life ('Life is a second-hand bookshop, and we are all volumes, bound or otherwise...'). There are the same arbitrary plot twists: gun turns out to be water-pistol, Jewish bookseller turns out (despite amply displayed circumcision) to be ex-Nazi; and as the negro prepares to

give himself up to the surrounding cops, the old man himself rushes through the door and takes the gunfire. While it is exploring the possibilities of humiliation (the gun changes hands half-way through) the play is weirdly entertaining: the bookseller, at gun point, is required to crow like a cock, display his genitalia and do a quick-step for the negro's entertainment: the negro is in turn called upon to make love to a chair, which he does with infinite resource. But by the end so many carpets have been pulled from so many feet that there is no firm ground left to stand on.

To the delight of the audience at the Lamb and Flag, John Walsh's *The Night of the Rodents* (Apex Theatre Company) had all the thrills and spills of authentic melodrama. A piece of raw American Grand Guignol, with lashings of blood and whiskey, and two main characters, one big and dumb, the other small and wily, straight out of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Holing up in a rat-infested barn, these two down-and-outs (Walt, the small one, has homosexual designs on Al, the big one) are surprised by a wounded negro with a gun (running from the law). The ensuing power battle (Al goes for bandages while Walt stays as hostage) is frenzied, bloodstained and occasionally self-spoofing. The plot twists are all the more welcome for being true to character, and the cast act the vivid dialogue with rare gusto and unwavering Midwest accents.

Philip Martin's *Duel*, at the Quipu Basement Theatre, also goes West, with a few nods to Genet on the way. Two young men, a self-assured bank clerk from London and a factory hand from the North, act out their heroic-erotic fantasies Western-style on a 'holiday ranch', competing for the attentions of Linda, a young schoolmistress. It sounds exotic, and it almost is, but Philip Martin, like Richard Metallus, has a fatal weakness for springing pointless surprises. After the bank clerk has defeated the factory hand in a war of nerves involving real guns, he naturally claims Linda. But Linda turns out to be a tart on vacation, and fully intends to spend her last night off-work. Up to this point Martin's play is full of such good things—the Western pastiche is wittily written, the characters well drawn (the bank clerk for instance is a stickler for historical accuracy)—and the whole air of jaded adulthood finding release in childish games so authentic, that contrived last-scene reversals seem depressingly unnecessary. It goes back to audience impact again. If a play can keep its audience spellbound by the power of its writing, well and good. To rely on horny plot twists to do the trick for you suggests a chronic lack of faith in one's material.

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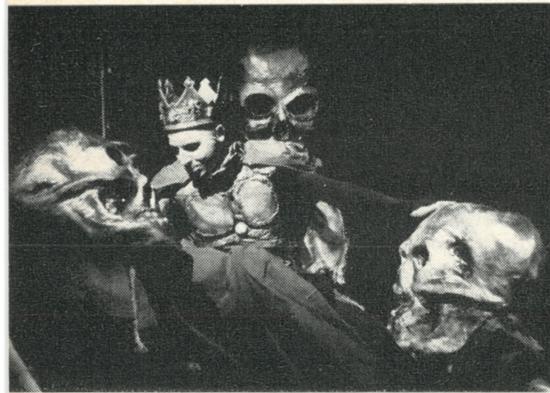
THE REGIONS

NEWSLETTERS

SHEFFIELD

PAUL ALLEN

FIRST THE CERTAINTY: in almost exactly a year's time Sheffield's new repertory theatre, now officially christened The Crucible (the reference is to metal refining in the city of steel rather than Arthur Miller's New England witches), offers itself to public scrutiny for the first time. Another certainty, but still in the mists of long-term planning, is a civic proposal for another theatre to house such roadshows as there may be in the eighties, along with national touring companies and the stronger local amateurs. Larger than The Crucible and with a more conventional design than the latter's uncom-



Colin George's production of *Macbeth* at the Sheffield Playhouse, designed by the Polish designer, Josef Szajna.

Nigel Hawthorne is Macbeth

promising promontory stage, the civic proposal is uncotted and unsited.

Outside the city and slap in the middle of one of England's hitherto culturally most derelict areas, various South Yorkshire local authorities are engaged in talks which could lead to a shared professional company to occupy theatres already built or planned, and an ex-RSC actor, Richard Williams, is working with more faith than funds to establish a portable theatre to operate from Sheffield in a dozen of the smaller towns of the West Riding. Not bad for a region where the tradition of serious theatre is almost negligible.

It all smacks rather more of jam tomorrow than of jam today, however. Up to a point Sheffield Playhouse, whose director (Colin George) has already been appointed director of The Crucible, has started to face the issue of whether it can turn itself from a good provincial rep into an exciting regional theatre. An extension of normal programme planning about a

year ago has meant lunchtime and late night productions, bringing work by Beckett, Ionesco, the Ken Campbell Roadshow and (in December) Edward Bond to audiences who otherwise would not, apparently, dream of going to the theatre.

In a city where the classes who traditionally constitute the theatregoing public are thin on the ground this move has been doubly important. It seems to be paying off. A survey taken at a recent run of Orton's *What the Butler Saw* (admittedly a special case) showed that 40 per cent of the audience were under 25.

The major productions have, however, continued to be competent rather than breathtaking. More money is evidently being spent on more experienced actors in the current season, a policy which has borne fruit without lifting Sheffield into the required new league until the current production of *Macbeth* directed by Colin George and designed by the distinguished Polish designer, Josef Szajna.

This is certainly among the best *Macbeth*'s I have seen and is the first Sheffield production since the much-vaunted *Oedipus* three years ago to be able to stand without fear or favour alongside anything that goes on in Nottingham or Leeds and perhaps Manchester too. Not everyone will respond favourably to every idea crammed in by both director and designer (the shaven heads given to Duncan's vulnerable sons as well as Macbeth himself as a symbol of the fascism that lies in all who aspire to royalty, for instance), but it is hard not to be absorbed by the sheer coherence and intelligibility of Mr George's basic theme—that the witches are the instruments as well as the prophets of Macbeth's doom: the three male actors who play them take off their polystyrene skulls to double as murderers, attendants and, memorably, as three porters in a scene which for once is both funny and important to the plot.

The other major weapons in Mr George's armoury is Theatre Vanguard, based on the Playhouse but dividing its responsibilities between work with local schools (thoroughly and happily divorced from set books and conventional drama teaching) and experimental work in the main theatre or taken outside to the community. The Crucible has a small adaptable studio to meet its future requirements.

MANCHESTER

ROBIN THORNBERRY

THIS AUTUMN seems to have been a season of truthful apostasy in Manchester, with the three resident companies producing a

new play each in a frantic burst of role-swapping.

Granada's Stables theatre club, which likes to think of itself as the city's experimental studio, discovered a thoughtfully written, beautifully constructed, and thoroughly traditional work by Trevor Griffiths, a Mancunian who works for the BBC and had a very professional one-acter, *Wages of Thin*, as a late-night show there a year ago. His new, full-length work, *Occupations*, is revolutionary only in its theme (the notion is a recurrent one at the Stables), which deals with a workers' revolt in Turin in 1920.

It may not sound like the stuff that dreams are made of, but the author has found a back-drop which provides a surprisingly accurate model of our own turbulent age—with the Communists poised for revolution, the establishment desperately defending big business, and the right-wing backlash lurking in the shadows.

But *Occupations* is no mere ideological essay. It is a work of both artistry and craftsmanship which uses stage technique to heighten the simple, truthful narrative into compelling drama and reflects the complex issues through rounded characterisation. For me, the curtain of the first act provided one of those unforgettable moments of theatrical exhilaration when Richard Kane, in an outstanding performance as Gramsci, the dwarf intellectual who leads the car workers into occupying and running their factory, recognises the humanity in the enigmatic undercover emissary from Moscow, Kabak, as he worries over his dying mistress. 'Goodnight,' whispers Gramsci. 'Comrade.'

The play shuns sentimentality, however, as fiercely as cynicism. The Marxist mogul abandons the idealist revolutionaries when their cause is betrayed, negotiating a pact between Moscow and the Fiat bosses as callously as he deserts his aristocratic mistress. Griffiths's gifts for both symbolism and shock combine in a chilling epilogue when the countess, injecting an overdose of cocaine, identifies the Bolshevism that emptied her life with the cancer that preyed on her womb.

For all its sophisticated skill and thoughtful passion, *Occupations* is more suited to the intense and esoteric audience at the Stables than to a peak viewing slot on the network, but I'm sure we'll be hearing more of what Mr Griffiths has to say. It's depressing to think that Manchester theatre is ahead of its audience, but sometimes difficult to avoid. Ten people walked out on the night I saw Charles Wood's *Dingo* given its first public (non-club) performance at the Library.

Admittedly this was a wild adventure for a theatre we have come to think of as a repository for worthily handled GCE texts, but they did warn us in all their publicity that 'some people may be offended both by its content and its style'. So it seems to me that there was no excuse for those who couldn't take the horrors of this 'Oh What a Lovely World War II'.

It really isn't good enough to say that any response is better than polite, bored applause. That sort of argument isn't going to help director John Blackmore and his assistant Gloria Parkinson to justify their bravery to the councillors and committees they have to answer to. And the saddening truth is that what appeared to cause offence was not the gross obscenities like the waste of life at Alamein which Wood was exposing, but the frustrated ribaldry and military adjectives of troops in the desert.

On the other hand, Mancunians have been flocking to the University Theatre where 69 Theatre Company, which aspires to be the quality regional theatre, was letting down its hair with a rock musical by Jack Good. *Catch My Soul* is said to be based on *Othello*, but as I couldn't hear a word of the passages of blank verse which linked the songs I can't really comment on their relationship.

It seems a good idea to up-date the

race theme by dressing everyone in Texan buckskins (especially when you've been promoting P J Proby in the role of Cassio)—but that sort of realism fell down when they painted Jack Good black for *Othello*: whaddya mean there are no Negro males who can act and sing? Nobody else could.

Seriously though (and who is?) *Catch My Soul* is on its way to London via Birmingham and Oxford, and it's your loss that it isn't a better example of Michael Elliott's work with 69.

BRISTOL

MICHAEL ANDERSON

'Sir,

'Since the reopening of the Theatre Royal, Bristol, under the auspices of CEMA, the excellent suggestion has been made that the building next door, the Coopers' Hall, should be acquired to serve as an annexe for exhibitions, etc.'

So began a letter, from one 'F.R.W.', in the correspondence columns of *Country Life* for October 29 1943. Bristolians like to take their time and it is only now, almost thirty years later, that the Coopers' Hall is about to become part of the Theatre Royal complex. On May 2

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REGIONAL GUIDE

BIRMINGHAM—Repertory Theatre: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare) to December 12; *1066 And All That* (Reginald Arkell and Alfred Reynolds) December 16 to February 27.

BRADFORD—Bradford & Halifax Theatre Company: Bradford Library Theatre: *Lady Audley's Secret* (Mary Elizabeth Braddon and C H Hazlewood) November 24 to December 5.

BRISTOL—Little: Bristol Old Vic: *What the Butler Saw* (Orton) to December 19; *The Merry Gentlemen* (Julian Slade and Dorothy Reynolds) December 23 to February 6.

CHESTER—Gateway: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare) November 17 to December 5.

COLCHESTER—Repertory Theatre: *What the Butler Saw* (Orton) November 24 to December 12; *Dick Whittington*, December 23 to January 23.

COVENTRY—Belgrade: *The Happy Apple* (Jack Pulman) November 24 to December 12; *Dick Whittington and his Wonderful Cat* (John Crocker and Eric Gilder) December 17 to January 16.

CREWE—Crewe Theatre: Victorian Music Hall, November 24 to December 5.

DUNDEE—Repertory Theatre: *The Ghost Train* (Arnold Ridley) November 24 to December 12; *Dick Whittington and his Cat*, December 16 to January 9.

EDINBURGH—Royal Lyceum: *Vincent* (W Gordon Smith) November 23 to 28. *Traverse: A Game Called Arthur* (David Snodin) to December 6.

EXETER—Northcott: *The Boy Friend* (Sandy Wilson); *The Fantastic Fairground* (Bernard Goss) in repertory December 10 to January 23.

GREENWICH—*Voyage Around My Father* (John Mortimer) November 24 to December 19; *Dick Whittington*, December 23 to January 9.

HORNCHURCH—Queen's: *Edwardian Music Hall*, November 23 to December 12.

IPSWICH—Arts: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Stoppard) to November 28; *Springtime for Henry* (Benn W Levy) December 1 to 19.

LANCASTER—Century Theatre company: Old Auction Mart: *Spring and Port Wine* (Naughton) November 23 to 25; *She Stoops to Conquer* (Goldsmith) November 26 to 28.

LEATHERHEAD—Thorndike: *Children's Day* (Waterhouse and Hall) November 24 to December 12; *Puss In Boots* (John Crocker and Eric Gilder) December 26 to January 23.

LEEDS—Playhouse: *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare); *Love for Love* (Congreve); *Old King Cole* (Ken Campbell) in repertory, joined by *Oh Glorious Jubilee!* (Ian Gourley) from December 10.

LEICESTER—Phoenix: *The Wizard of Oz* (Alfred Bradley) November 30 to January 2.

LIVERPOOL—Everyman: *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett) November 25 to December 12; *Miracle Plays*, December 16 to 19. Playhouse: *Great Expectations* (Dickens) November 24 to December 19; *Charley's Aunt* (Brandon Thomas) December 23 to January 23; *Old King Cole* (Ken Campbell) mats only from December 24.

MANCHESTER—*The Recruiting Officer* (Farquhar) to December 5; *Merlin the Wizard* (John Blackmore and Gloria Parkinson) December 8 to February 6. 69 Theatre Company: *Peer Gynt* (Ibsen/Michael Meyer) December 21 to January 23.

NEWCASTLE—Tyneside Theatre Company: University Theatre: *Bartholomew Fair* (Jonson) November 30 to December 19; *Old King Cole* (Ken Campbell) December 22 to January 9.

NORTHAMPTON—*Not Now, Darling* (Ray Cooney and John Chapman) November 24 to December 12.

SALISBURY—Playhouse: *Not Now, Darling* (Cooney and Chapman) to November 28; *Rattle of a Simple Man* (Charles Dyer) December 1 to 12; *Cinderella* (Henry Marshall) December 19 to January 30.

SHEFFIELD—Playhouse: *The Ruling Class* (Peter Barnes) to December 1; *Macbeth* (Shakespeare) December 2 to 5; *Teasdale's Follies* (local documentary) December 9 to 19, January 11 to 16, February 1 to 6, 22 to 27; *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Alan Cullen) December 24 to January 9, January 18 to 30, February 8 to 20.

STOKE-ON-TRENT—Victoria: *The Affair at Bent's Hill* (Terson) November 24 to 28; *Ghosts* (Ibsen) November 30 to December 5; *Pinocchio* (Brian Way and Warren Jenkins) December 8 to January 9.

WATFORD—Palace: *Old King Cole* (Ken Campbell) to November 28; *Mother Goose*, December 22 to January 16.

WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA—Palace: *Arms and the Man* (Shaw) to November 28; *What the Butler Saw* (Orton) December 1 to 12; *The Owl and the Pussycat* (David Wood and Sheila Ruskin) December 14 to 19.

WINDSOR—Theatre Royal: *Who Goes Bare?* (Richard Harris and Leslie Darbon) November 24 to December 12.

WORTHING—Connaught: *The Lion in Winter* (James Goldman) to November 28; *Harlequinade*, *The Browning Version* (Rattigan) December 1 to 12. *Music Hall* (Reginald Long) December 13 to 19.



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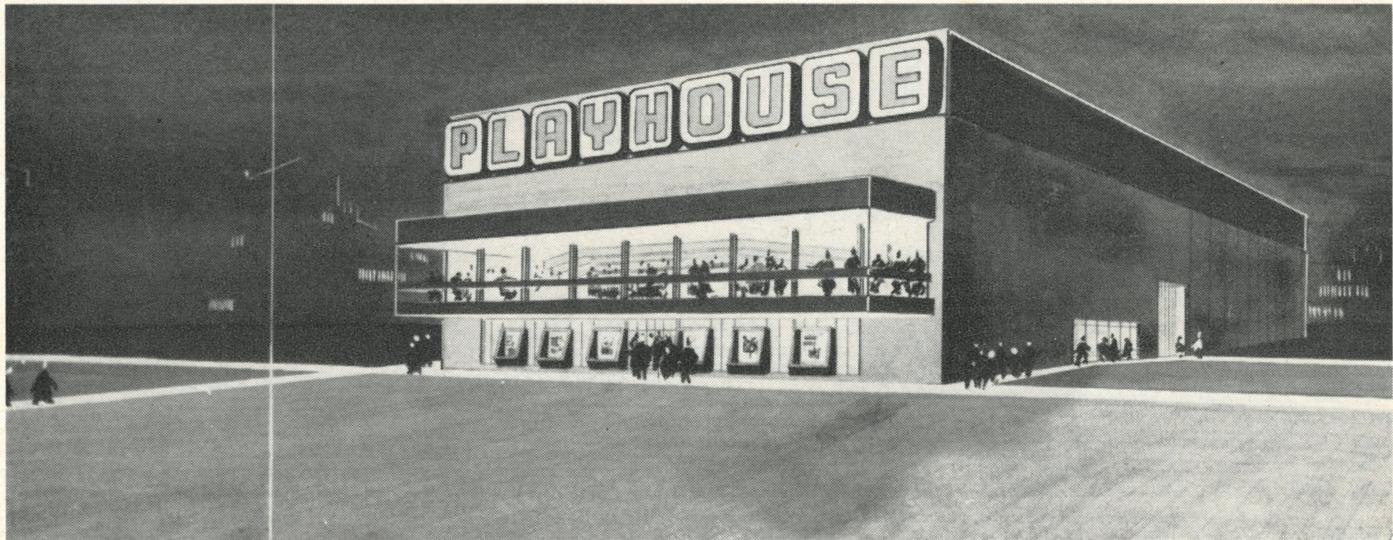
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QUICK THEATRE GUIDE — No 17

BOOKING / FOOD / DRINKS / TRANSPORT / PROGRAMMES



THE LEEDS PLAYHOUSE

Robin Thornber

LEEDS is an open sort of place. Cleaner and more airy than most northern industrial cities, with a lively atmosphere. Much of the vitality comes from two institutions—the university and the BBC (yes, the BBC: think of Alfred Bradley's *Northern Drift*, and Phil Sidley's local radio which encourages people to wander in and broadcast). The new Playhouse, to be officially opened by Prince Charles on December 10, is significantly situated between the two.

The building, designed by W Houghton-Evans, is an enormous box, the twin of an adjacent sports hall, on a site given by the university in a redevelopment area just behind the town hall in the city centre. At £150,000 for 750 seats it must be the lowest cost per seat of any recent theatre. (But there's still an overdraft to pay off by donating seats at 25 guineas or seven instalments of 4 guineas.)

But it's by no means cheap and nasty. Actors' amenities and technical facilities are outstanding (where else do you have carpeted stairs backstage?) Front-of-house fittings are bright and trim. A lot of the saving has been on office accommodation—the administration is housed in a converted cinema five minutes away. The Gaumont also provides a rehearsal room, workshop space, and maybe later on room for a children's and studio theatre.

Back at the Playhouse there's a wide open stage with the acting area like a huge threepenny bit thrusting out from

the wings into the steeply raked wrap-around auditorium, with comfortable armchairs never more than 75 feet from the action. It suits the wide-open, thrusting policy of artistic director Bill Hays.

Hays, 32, was behind the Leicester Phoenix, spent six years in television, then went freelance and produced *Close The Coalhouse Door* and *The Hero Rises Up*. He wants to leave intimate drama to the little box and kick his audience in the stomach—politically and emotionally—with big, colourful, amazing theatre. And he wants to open it up to a non-intellectual, popular audience.

He's got a resident company of around 20, with occasional visiting 'names', playing three shows in repertory. The first two productions (reviewed last month)—Pirandello's *Henry IV* which was previewed at Nottingham and the Edinburgh Festival, and the Plater/Glasgow musical *Simon Says* which opened the Playhouse in a blaze of controversy—suggest the direction in which he'll be going.

BOX OFFICE:

THE BOOKING OFFICE itself echoes the theatre's policy—it's an open counter thrusting into the spacious foyer. No uniformed doormen to shoo people off, no pokey cashier's window (why do other theatres hide their box offices like bank tellers? When was the last time a theatre's takings were worth a hold-up?) Instead of forbidding haridans, it's

'manned' by two attractive young girls who are polite and efficient. Their phone number is Leeds (0532) 42111. It's open from 10 am to 9 pm, and you can also book at the Gaumont (42141/42145; 10 am—6 pm) and at ticket agencies in the university and scattered around the city and county. Evening performances at 7.30 and Saturday matinees at 3.00.

TICKETS:

NUMBERED TICKETS (a reactionary idea) at 6s, 10s, 12s, and 14s. Gift vouchers for 30s include supper with wine in the restaurant before or after the play; for 60s you get six 12s seats. Concessions to: children and pensioners, half price at matinees; children and students, 2s off all seats over 6s except Saturday evening; parties of 20 or more, 1s off seats over 6s except Saturday evening. Parties can also claim a travel subsidy from their regional arts association.

PROGRAMMES:

A POINT OF PRIDE, and so far justly. Sixteen pages for 1s with only six pages of advertising. Homegrown and specially designed for each show, they carry illustrated company biographies and trailers for future productions, and helpful blurbs which don't try to tell you what to think. Covers have been good: an original Gerald Scarfe cartoon set the tone for *Simon Says* . . .

LOOS:

SETS of two on right and left of the foyer, ample space so there shouldn't be any queueing; diddy ones for kids.

COFFEE:

TWO coffee bars serving real coffee with real cream at 1s 3d, with wholesome bites to eat. Unfortunately pouring cream over the back of the spoon means service is so slow that you've got to dash out as soon as the houselights go up or it's too hot to drink before the PA system is urging you back to your seat.

BARS & RESTAURANT:

THE BARS and restaurant are in a 100 foot long gallery cantilevered out over the entrance, with a panoramic view over the city centre. The bars have pub licensing hours and they're open to the public as well as ticket holders (so intervals are

crowded, but think of a 100 foot long bar . . .)

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries provided the furniture and the beers—Youngers Tartan Keg and Newcastle Brown for the connoisseur.

A down-to-earth restaurant open all day from 9.30 am to 11.00 pm and again to all comers. Menus range from bacon butties for breakfast and fish and chips after the show (from the buffet counter) to an evening meal of steak or chicken with vin ordinaire and waitress service. Sample prices: huge meat salad sandwiches, 2s; cottage pie for lunch, 4s 6d, steak 10s. Nothing pretentious, but good and wholesome as the apple pie.

PUBS:

IF YOU MUST escape the theatre to drink there's the Fenton, across the car park on Woodhouse Lane, which is the BBC's local and always crowded. The Victoria on Calverley Street, behind the town hall, serves good hot and cold snacks in the evenings and is a good idea if you like a

touch of old-fashioned Victorian atmosphere.

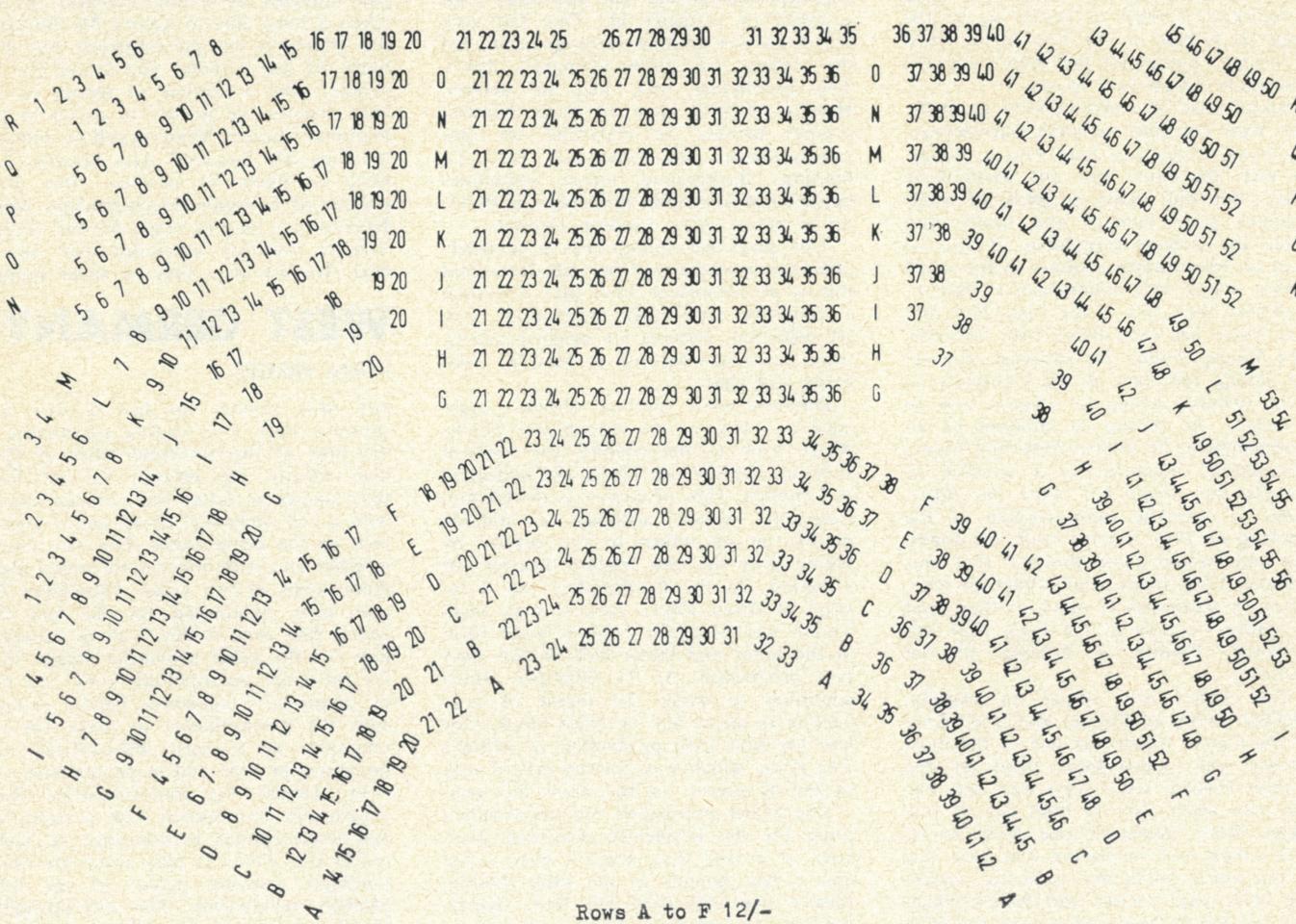
EATING OUT:

AGAIN, if you don't fancy eating in the theatre the nearest and most frequented restaurant is the Athenaeum, a Berni Inn on the Headrow. For late-night eating with real atmosphere, Get Stuffed in Park Cross Street is open until 2 am. There's an Italian trattoria, the Milano, at 621 Roundhay Road, with good food and service up to 11.30.

HOTELS:

BUSINESSMEN'S (ie expense account) hotels include the Queen's (old-fashioned gracious) in City Square, with sophisticated Harewood Restaurant. Double room with bath 165s, with breakfast 15s extra and 12½ per cent added. Or the Merrion in the Merrion Centre (newish and electronic). Double room 150s with 14½ per cent on top.

For the rest of us, there's the Barringtons—
to page 64



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EUROPE

NEWSLETTERS

DUBLIN

GERALD COLGAN

THE DIRECTORSHIP of the Abbey Theatre, whose commitment has always been recognisably as much to chauvinistic endeavour as to theatre, recently let their hair down (and that's my bid for metaphor of the month) by sanctioning the production at the Peacock of a highly irreverent revue about the Northern Ireland upheavals. It was called *A State of Chassis*, and written by John D Stewart, Eugene Watters and Tomás MacAnna; the latter also directed. Naturally, there were charges of sacrilege from the more intense and vocal section of the audiences; a scene depicting Bernadette Devlin giving a television interview, fag dangling from one hand and a glass of whiskey in the other, provoked a well-known rebel to storm on to the stage in protest on the first night. This, of course, guaranteed the show's success, and made tickets hard to get.

Accusations of scurrility were naturally met with the line we-laugh-that-we-may-not-weep, which is a hard one to dodge. In fact, the show was not particularly witty, but did exude a spirit of rumbustious good humour and sanity that made its excesses acceptable. It was at least an encouraging contrast to the usual Abbey stance that nationalism is akin to godliness—but only if it's Irish. Not that this stance has been abandoned, however. The Young Abbey, for instance, was set up among members of the Company to bring creative drama to schools, and to introduce the theatre to children as an entertainment. So what is their first drama programme, presented at a number of schools this year? *Up With the Barricades*, a dramatic reconstruction of the uprising of 1916. Stirring stuff, no doubt, but one would have thought that our schoolchildren today need a tract on revolutionary patriotism as much as they need—literally—a hole in the head. But our National Theatre is nothing if not national.

The Abbey also staged an eagerly-awaited revival of Eugene McCabe's *King of the Castle*, which was one of the most praised and talked-about plays of the Dublin Festival some years ago, but was not seen again after its brief run of one week. What impressed one most at its first outing was the feeling that here was a new voice, harsh but authentic, speaking of a rural society and values which had not before been depicted on the Irish stage. The story had impact and humanity. An elderly, domineering farmer is unable himself to satisfy the desire of his young wife for children, and the logic of his buy-and-sell life drives him to the solu-

tion of a hired lover to supply the deficiency. A journeyman labourer is found for the chore, and only when it is accomplished do they find the true price of trading their deepest selves like cattle in the market-place. The last despairing line, uttered by the wife, was 'we're not yesterday's people'.

Something went badly wrong with the Abbey's version, and it seemed to be for a number of reasons difficult to separate. The script appeared to be changed considerably; one felt that an additional and inappropriate layer of polish had been added, and the ending was changed out of all recognition. In fact, there was no ending; the curtain rang down just as the husband returned from a business trip to find his wife, in this version rather jubilantly non-tragic, showing signs of emancipation through sex, and more than a touch of women's lib. One felt sure that there was another scene to come, but the curtain was quite adamantly down. The production, too, had its defects. Hordes of little men in macs scurried around hauling an elaborate set into sundry shapes, and were really very distracting. Background music sometimes helped, but sometimes hindered, the buildup of mood. Alan Simpson directed.

This particular failure was a considerable disappointment. One still feels that this is an important Irish play, awaiting a definitive script and production; and, on reflection, perhaps the original outing, those years ago, was not so very far from being just that.

Dublin's other national theatre, managed as always by the redoubtable Phyllis Ryan, took to the country for summer survival, and built up substantial audiences in Limerick. This, of course, is the Gemini Company, which achieved a notable double on its return to the capital by taking over the two biggest theatres for a period. At the Gaiety they ran a revival of Brian Friel's *Lovers*, with Niall Toibin and Maureen Toal in good form in the latter and better half of this two-part production. At the Olympia, which continues to avoid the threat of conversion to dance hall or office block, they had the first Irish production of Miller's *The Price*, which was, for my critic's pass in lieu of money, the best show this year.

The Miller production was an excellent tonic for the frequently dispirited playgoer. It proved that, given a good script and a few pounds in the kitty, Dublin theatre can still rival the best. Opportunities to practice one's superlatives don't come all that frequently nowadays, but there was no aspect of this show that does not merit the effort. The set, imported from London; Barry Cassin's direction; and vintage acting; all were

superb.

The acting, in fact, obstructed my search for golden epithet by posing a conundrum: when is a revelation not a revelation? The answer being, when one knows what to expect in advance. Dublin has always had its share of professional craftsmen in the acting field, despite lean times and thin parts. Gerry Alexander has been solidly around for more than fifteen years, all of which were reflected in his searing portrayal of the ageing cop who kept faith with the best of himself, even while knowing that, by the world's standards, he was being conned out of his youth and legitimate ambitions. Not revelation, no; perhaps the shock of recognition.

As I write, the Abbey curtain goes up on a production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, directed by Hilton Edwards. It has taken a long time to accord Mr Edwards this tribute to his pre-eminence, but it is none the less welcome and fitting that he should, after a lifetime of service to the Irish theatre, be invited to direct in the National Theatre. There is still no news as to when Mr Edwards' own theatre—The Gate—is likely to re-open after completion of necessary reconstruction work. Hopefully it may be ready for the Dublin Theatre Festival scheduled for March next. We live in a time of silver linings.

WEST GERMANY

IWAN NAGEL

THE NEW SEASON has had a slow and cautious start. The leading playhouses in the four or five principal cities of German theatre are reticent to call back their audiences (after the summer break), with a full orchestral chord and a mighty beat on the kettle-drums. For who knows whether that sensational noise would make them come, or run away. Attendance figures have diminished for the last few years. And even if this is more generally true for the small provincial stages, than for the large metropolitan ones—the fact of diminishing audiences hardly encourages the managements to make for triumphant, or at least self-confident, innovations in style and in programme.

In Munich, the state-subsidised Residenztheater has opened with a restrained and unpretentious performance of Tankred Dorst's *Toller* (a play about the heartrendingly pathetic defeat of the 1919 Munich revolution). The city-subsidised Munich Kammerspiele will not open until December. That delightfully intimate theatre is being meticulously restored to its original 'art nouveau' shape and colours (grass green and pink). It was designed in 1911 by the great 'Jugendstil'

architect Richard Riemerschmid; and will reopen with a revival of a play of the same period, Carl Sternheim's *Citizen Schippek*.

In Hamburg, Hans Lietzau, the managing director of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus, has been rehearsing *Richard II* since the beginning of August. The first night is scheduled for November. Meanwhile, the company presented *Pygmalion* and Sternheim's *Die Hose*: two plays, which, apart from obeying the fashionable trend to the 'tens and 'twenties, have another advantage in common, that of a small cast. They do not hinder Lietzau in using the rest of his huge company for the interminable Shakespeare rehearsals. The competing Hamburg playhouse, the Thalia Theater, started off with Arthur Schnitzler's *Professor Bernhardi* (again written in 1912), an early and well-written dramatic report on Austrian antisemitism. Hans Hollmann's production of *Troilus and Cressida* is to follow—the day after Lietzau presents *Richard II*.

Apparently no German theatre can consider its season validly opened, before it shows a Shakespearean production. Berlin's Schiller-Theater chose *Henry IV*, Düsseldorf's Schauspielhaus *Hamlet*. Some of the best German actors play in both performances. But as the two directors, Ernst Schröder (in Berlin) and Karl-Heinz Stroux (in Düsseldorf) have had no revealing views on the respective plays, Martin Held's Falstaff turned out to be a conventional roaring Uncle Jack—and Helmut Lohner's Hamlet a conventional Student Prince of Wittenberg. German audiences and critics go on waiting for Shakespeare, and, although we have reached the first days of November, waiting also for the new season.

BRISTOL —from page 53

of this year Dame Sybil Thorndike (who had re-opened the Theatre in 1943) spoke an epilogue composed by J B Priestley, and the Theatre Royal shut its doors for an extended period of redevelopment. The Coopers' Hall, a handsome piece of architecture with a Georgian façade designed by William Halfpenny in 1744, 22 years before the theatre itself opened, has been rescued from an ignominious fate as a vegetable store and its interior, with refurbished splendour, will now provide a foyer, box office, gallery and bar for the adjacent theatre. The tunnel-like passage through which generations of theatregoers have hurried on their way to the Theatre Royal's current attraction will be no more: audiences will reach the theatre through an entrance below and between the Palladian columns of Coopers' Hall. In place of the tunnel there will be a small, adaptable studio theatre. The plans by Peter Moro, the Nottingham Playhouse architect, will preserve the Theatre Royal's attractive auditorium but will provide a new stage, dressing rooms and backstage facilities adequate for a modern working theatre.

The ambitious scheme, whose estimated

cost when work began was £500,000, is to be paid for partly by the Arts Council, who are contributing £125,000, and partly by funds to be raised from a nation-wide appeal. The Corporation has shown its support by leasing Coopers' Hall to the Bristol Old Vic Trust at a nominal rent. Costs have certainly escalated since building began and a report in the local press, under the sensational headline 'Call in Lord Eccles over theatre appeal', refers to a present shortfall of £250,000. No official statement on the progress of building work is likely to appear from the Trust before the next governors' meeting in November but the governors, I am told, are optimistic that the Theatre Royal will reopen in the autumn of 1971.

While the Theatre Royal remains dark the Bristol Old Vic Company has not been idle. Acquiring a temporary home in the Theatre Royal, Bath, the Company has presented a season of four plays there this autumn. Three were standard classics, with more than an emphasis on comedy—*The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Arms and the Man* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (which ran until November 14)—the fourth, 'recommended for mature audiences only', as the programme warned its readers in heavy type, was Osborne's *A Patriot for Me*, in its first revival since the club production at the Royal Court in 1965. The first two of these plays set off on a provincial tour on October 5; all four are to appear in a month's season at the New Theatre, Cardiff, opening on November 16.

On paper *A Patriot for Me* is one of Osborne's better plays: it has a hero whose character deepens and develops with the understanding of his nature as a homosexual, and there is a well-sustained historical background. But it is a patchy, episodic work and John David's solid, ungimmicky production brought out its virtues without concealing its deficiencies. It was only rarely that we glimpsed the authentic splendour of Osborne at his passionate, wounding best: Redl (played authoritatively by Richard Heffer), tormented by the failure of his relationship with Countess Oblinsky, or railing with sudden vindictiveness against a hapless lover who wants to leave him and marry a girl, and of course in the centrepiece of the play, the notorious drag ball which is Redl's initiation to the forced gaiety and tawdry pathos of homosexual life. It says something—I am not sure what—for progress that a play which the Lord Chamberlain regarded as a moral danger to the nation in 1965 left a provincial audience unshocked in 1970.

In Bristol itself, the Company continues to play at the Little Theatre in the Colston Hall, acquired as a second theatre for the Bristol Old Vic Trust in 1963. October saw *The Winter's Tale* in a production by Jane Howell which augurs well for the Northcott, Exeter, where she now moves to take up the post of Director. This was a production which showed how effectively Miss Howell can combine technical ingenuity with a sensitive reading of the text.

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TV DRAMA

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'AT THE GOING DOWN of the sun, and in the morning, we shall remember them.' Armistice Day just passed, a month's viewing of television drama done, and I can't help feeling how fitting this sad, patriotic sentiment is for television writers. Their names flit across the screen, actors say their lines, directors dissolve, or more fashionably cut, ten final bars of theme music, and one flicks the control button, puts the dog out, and climbs up to bed with the heavy premonition of square,

of melancholic transience. To be even on nodding terms with his bank manager a TV writer must keep writing. He must either keep churning out the plays, and finding producers willing to do them, or else involve himself in the endless treadmill of series episodes. And whereas everything else in television is based on technique or mechanical savvy, the writer inevitably has to rely on ideas new-born. There is nothing like watching the desolate drama of the Nine O'Clock News to sap the conviction of a writer just embarking on the dramatic minutiae of yet another suburban adultery plot. ('Darling,

'Armchair Theatre' present themselves quietly, featuring mostly the work of professional television writers whose plays adhere to the old rule about 54-minute plays being basically dramatised short stories. They deal in recognisable characters and situations, and are uniformly well-acted and tautly directed. They make up in professionalism what they lack of BBC ballyhoo.

Undoubtedly the best of 'Armchair Theatre' this month was Colin Welland's *Say Goodnight to Your Grandma*. As well as containing Welland's finely-observed preoccupation with male togetherness, it had a bright, warm-hearted approach to maternal attitudes. Madge Ryan was a splendidly bitchy Gran, Susan Jameson had equal ammunition as the wife, and Colin Welland himself gave an unselfish, quietly effective performance as the husband forced to grow up in the clash of new wife and old mate. Fay Weldon's *Poor Mother* had its moments, but lacked the warmth or the consistent viewpoint of the Welland play. Weldon's normally cool, cynical line of feminist attack backfired into a slightly hysterical look at a maternity ward and a cloying marriage.

Yorkshire, constantly resourceful, came up with the month's most ambitious dramatic project, *Exiles*, a trilogy by Ray Jenkins. Each play took a member of a lower middle-class family, concentrating on the cause and effect of their socially-exiled disaffection. At times there seemed to be an endless amount of rather heavy, 'significant' chat. The high velocity effect here may in part have been due to Marc Miller's close and claustrophobic direction, which tended to give rise to a sort of mesmerised hysteria at the receiving end. Making allowances for longuers in three hours' worth of playing time, however, Ray Jenkins did have something to say that lasted the course. It was finely played by Madolin Thomas as Gran, and two lovely and disaffected daughters played by Hannah Gordon and Jennifer Hilary with depth and fierce spirit.

Anglia, with an excellent reputation for comedy and thrillers, came up with one of those rare, genuine spine-chillers. Paul Ableman's *Visit from a Stranger* was based on a chillingly original idea; a man preordains himself to commit a murder, but leaves himself enough 'out' clauses so he won't really have to do it. As he visits a beautiful woman now living in his old apartment, he finds the 'out' clauses gradually whittled away till he is faced with the intellectual and emotional compulsion to kill her. I've rarely been gripped to such an extent by a television thriller. John Jacobs directed tightly and



Ingmar Bergman's *The Lie*—October 29 in BBC 1's *Play for Today* series

bloodshot eyes in the morning. At least there is the consolation of knowing the TV playwrights are simultaneously doing the same thing—Ray Jenkins switching off his electric blanket, Emanuel Litvinoff having a goodnight flip through *The New Statesman*, Fay Weldon making her Ovaltine, even John Hopkins dozing off with dreams of a sextet. Not for them wild first night parties and the early morning vigil waiting for reviews; no publication day with a book in hard covers to cherish and show one's grandchildren ('We used to call these things books, dear, B-O-O-K-S'); not even the celluloid footage of the filmwriter, liable to turn up at the local Classic or Ionic, general release long gone.

If the career is short on kudos, its financial rewards also give rise to feelings

I sometimes think it's wrong our doing this when there's such horror in South-East Asia.' He kisses her, trying to soothe her cosmic angst. 'But, dearest, I can't do anything about that, but I can do something about you. Anyway, we only do it on Mondays when Jean's at her class.' 'All right, but I want us finished in time for *Panorama*.'

To abandon melancholy reflection, there is still plenty of television drama, despite gloomy predictions in the trade to the contrary. Increasingly it is tending to be put out under anthologised blanket-titles, or in series that have one running character but are basically hour-length plays in disguise. On this month's showing ITV has a slight edge over the BBC in the quantity of straight drama produced. Their Weekend drama spot and

soberly, and the performances by Honor Blackman and John Stride would have graced a Hitchcock.

Whereas one feels one can relax in slippers with a bottle of beer in front of ITV drama, there is a sneaky uneasiness when faced with the BBC's offerings that one should have changed into DJ, helped one's wife into her fauteuil, and opened a demi of Bollinger. I've no objection to TV giving a sense of occasion—it's all good publicity for writers and casts, if only the facts and the results weren't so laughable. No more Wednesday Plays we are told. We are promised a floating drama spot, which turns out to be a regular Thursday play portentously called 'Play for Today' (Today presumably meaning Thursday rather than Wednesday). Backed by long features in *The Radio Times*, the BBC launched them as though they were really something new. First off was Alan Sharp's *The Long-Distance Piano Player*. What both the BBC and the *RT* omitted to mention was that this was merely an adaptation of Sharp's radio play done nine years ago, extensively broadcast in Europe and nominated for the Italia Prize. It stood up well to television with good performances from Norman Rossington and Ray Davis, but, unfortunately, the critics, supposing it an original, went to town accusing Sharp of wholesale filching from any number of telly and film sources. The sad truth of the matter was that Sharp was more pioneer than plagiarist.

Two other plays in the series, Bergman's *The Lie* and Clive Exton's *Rainbird*, were originally intended for an infrequent and equally portentously

entitled series 'The Largest Theatre in the World'. On the shelf for some time, they are now trotted out as shiny originals for a glossy new event. The truth of the matter is that the BBC stockpiles plays with the fervour of a Great Power loading up her nuclear arsenal. There are dozens of writers round town who sold the BBC plays years ago and still await their hour's worth of pre-bedtime consummation. It must be nice to be paid the money, but they run the risk of waiting till 1982 to see their play trotted out under a 'Plays of the Century' label. It's a long time to keep the Bollinger on ice.

After Sharp came the Osborne and the Bergman with much advance trumpeting. In the event a small toot on the piccolo would have been more appropriate. Osborne's *The Right Prospectus* got a lot of publicity mileage out of the fact that it was based on a dream. It started with a splendid basic idea—a middle-aged couple (George Cole and Evi Hale) decide to go back to Public School—after that it went absolutely nowhere and had absolutely nothing to say at considerable length. It was the first time on stage or screen I have found Osborne a really total yawn. Its only effect was to remind me of the story told, apocryphally no doubt, about playwright and MP Benn Levy. He decided at one time to make note of all his dreams. For which purpose he left pencil and pad on his bedside table. One night he dreamed he was being the life and soul of a party till an unpleasant guest arrived and started to steal his thunder. Levy decided to leave, and at the door was confronted by the offensive guest who was loudly rude to

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WATCH FOR

November 25 Byron

Keith Barron in a BBC2 half-hour BBC2 9.20
Biography

November 26 A Different Thunder

Play for Today by politician BBC1 9.20
Maurice Edelman

November 27 The Editor Regrets

William Douglas-Home piece for BBC2 9.20
30 Minute Theatre slot

December 2 Howards End

Repeat of successful World BBC2 9.15
Theatre production based on E M
Forster's novel. With Glenda Jackson

December 8 Who's Been Sleeping
In My Bed?

Georgina Hale in BBC2 Menace BBC2 9.20
thriller

December 9 Vile Bodies

Play based on Evelyn Waugh satirical novel BBC2 9.20

December 16 Put Out More Flags

From Evelyn Waugh's disenchanted Second World War novel BBC2 9.20

December 20 Roll on 4 O'Clock

Colin Welland play for new Granada drama season takes a look at life in a Liverpool Secondary Modern ITV 9.00

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• WANTED

STUDENT WORKING ON PROJECT ON O'CASEY WOMEN characters would welcome any relevant material, including approach to characterisation by any actresses or producers (amateur or professional) who have portrayed them. J. Eggmore, 19 Dorset Way, Heston, Middlesex.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS: June 1965 to January 1966 inclusive, June 1967 to June 1969 inclusive. Odd copies acceptable. Please state price and condition. I. Smith, 29 Hevers Avenue, Horley, Surrey.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS JUNE 1968. Also R.S.C. Pericles Poster 1969. Please state cost. D. M. E. Coleman, 2 Newlyn Drive, Sale, Cheshire.

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE'S 'Wars of the Roses' 1963 and 1964, programmes and reviews. Any RSC material. Pay price asked. Richard Pearson, 9 Thrushill Drive, Halton, Lancaster. Tel. Halton-on-Lune 671.

URGENT. EP of 6 songs from The Hostage (London cast w. Ann Beach); also LP (HMV CLP) of London cast The Pajama Game w. Hockridge, Nichols, Wall, Seal, Emney, C. J. Clement, Ingram's Close, Felsted, Dunmow, Essex.

ANY PHOTOGRAPHS, PICTURES, CUTTINGS, INFORMATION etc. on James Kenney please. All letters answered. Miss M. Hemming, 152 Hamilton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 8AH.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS Sept. 1965. Good condition. Please state price. J. Higham, 18 Fairfield Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Lancs.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS November 1966 and any copies 1960-65 inclusive, also RSC programme Romeo and Juliet, Stratford 1967. C. Upton, 30 Tavistock Place, London, W.C.1.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS, September 1965 to June 1968, in good condition. Please state price. T. Hulse, High School for Boys, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, Yorks.

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PHOTOGRAPHS (glossies) from professional Shakespearean stagings and films. Will buy or trade. Particularly seeking Stratford and Old Vic productions. Send data and prices to L. Segal, 1302 North Las Palmas Avenue, Hollywood, California, 90028, USA.

RADIO DRAMA

DAVID WADE

STEREO first came to radio in the wake of the gramophone record. It began and has remained exclusively on Radio 3—and only on VHF at that. At the start stereo broadcasting meant music; then it was taken up tentatively by drama. Now, so I am told, every Radio 3 drama production is to be made and broadcast in stereo.

The audience for this sort of broadcasting is reckoned to be so small that it can hardly be measured. As things stand then, stereo is a service for the tiniest of tiny minorities and it suffers from the usual circular handicap: small budget=small promotion=small audience=small budget and so ad infinitum. The present drive in drama no doubt represents an additional injection of funds to try and change this situation.

What in fact are the chances of changing it? What are the things that recommend stereo to the play listener and are they sufficient to overcome the deterrents? For, make no mistake, that self-limiting budget is only one of the things that keeps stereo out of the home: there is the small matter of equipment—even if you already own a stereo record player you must add a special and quite expensive receiver. Moreover this sort of listening cannot really be done casually—to get the benefit of stereo you have to sit down to it, being rather careful to sit equidistant between your two nicely balanced speakers. And having done that, what do you get?

A happy experience with stereo music does not necessarily guarantee the same with plays. Perhaps the music makers are more practised; certainly, whatever you do, with music you get a rather satisfactory 'spread' of sound which quite nicely creates the illusion of listening to an orchestra. Listening to a play is not, at present, like sitting in a good seat in the stalls: indeed the effect for several reasons is often rather uncomfortable.

Although on the evidence of one or two recent productions, notably Euripides' *Ion* (Radio 3, Nov. 4) from Raymond Raikes, things may be improving, I have the impression that stereo drama is still not good at creating a sense of depth. Its actors tend to sound as if they were ranged along a frieze between the two loudspeakers and this is extremely disconcerting because the spread in one direction creates a partial illusion of staging. Accordingly the ear's eye (as it were) looks for three-dimensional grouping and finds none; it also has to make an effort to keep track of changing positions. There is another aural confusion: big scale scenes—battle and riot—appear to be happening in the same cubic space as

more intimate encounters. It is as if in the theatre a crowd scene played under full lighting on an open stage were to be followed by a tête-à-tête presented under exactly the same conditions; or like a film made with the camera locked at medium shot. This was particularly noticeable in Brecht's *In the Jungle of Cities* (Radio 3, November 1), where it was very hard indeed to form any idea of the changing space that surrounded the actors. Here was a flat play made even flatter, except for Peter Woodthorpe, whose performance was three dimensional on its own without any assistance from broadcasting techniques. In short it seems to me that stereo has so far not shown any marked superiority over mono in the setting and changing of scene.

Where it does seem to score is in the more formal items—conversation pieces for two or three speakers. Stanley Eveling's *Dear Mr Kooning, Dear Janet Rosenberg*, broadcast earlier this year, was an excellent example—though here there is another danger: producers seem fascinated by the ping-pong effect—one voice to a loudspeaker, sending the dialogue back and forth in antiphony. In Rhys Adrian's *I Will Love You Always, Always* (Radio 3, October 30) the two characters, intended to be chatting intimately in a pub, sounded as if they were seated at each end of a small refectory table. I wonder how much this absurdity contributed to my feeling that for once Mr Adrian's powers of stylisation had got out of hand; this struck me as a vapid piece of work.

Perhaps not surprisingly, stereo has also

done well in conveying ambitious patterns of sound where the texture is not far off musical. For this reason Ian Dougall's *The Immoral Young Ladies of Avignon* was good to listen to, although this was a case where the vehicle was distinctly more interesting than what it carried. Michael Mason's 'total studio experiences' (*Shadow of Napoleon*, etc) are probably the most successful use of large scale stereo to date and it is significant that Mr Mason has not been tied by the conventions of standard radio drama.

The history of this technique, then, reminds me of the early long playing records. They were not so good that one could actually mistake them for music, yet not too bad that the imagination could use them—as it did the 78s—as a sort of launching pad. Stereo sound provides too much information for the imagination to have full play. By doing so it creates a partial mental picture which often doesn't seem to square with any observed physical probability. The listener has a hell of a time sorting it out.

As yet, of course, it is early to say whether these limitations are inherent in the use of a two channel technique for plays. It seems to me that producers may have to unlearn quite a lot that was good for mono and begin to direct with varying three-dimensional spaces in mind. Actors too may have to evolve fresh techniques and writers may have to abandon radio realism. For now my tip would be: get stereo for the music—that's a justification on its own. Then you have stereo drama and all it may yet accomplish as a bonus.

LISTEN FOR

November 27	Captain Oates' Left Sock	John Antrobus' study of group therapy in a mental hospital.	Radio 3 9.35
November 29	Athalie	Irene Worth as the Racine heroine in a translation by John Cairncross.	Radio 3 6.45
December 6	Widowers' Houses	The early Shaw play satirising slum landowners.	Radio 4 2.30
December 7	Bakke's Night of Fame	John McGrath's version of William Butler's <i>A Danish Gambit</i> .	Radio 4 8.30
December 13	Dr Faustus	New stereo production of the Marlowe classic.	Radio 3 7.30
December 18	Where Are They Now?	A new Tom Stoppard comedy set at an old boys' reunion dinner.	Radio 3 8.05

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GREEN ROOM

PETER ROBERTS



HOPES IN HUNGARY

HOW SIXTEEN ADDS UP TO TWENTY-FIVE

A BUDAPEST SAMPLE

PREPARED TO WORK NUDE

SOMEBODY with an arithmetical turn of mind had decided to call it The Twenty-Fifth Theatre. And, as it was brand new and only seated 100, there were two official first nights. Not wishing to do any Hungarian out of the glory of having attended the opening of Budapest's very latest playhouse, I dropped in on the final dress rehearsal of *Mourning*, László Németh's play which had the honour of being chosen to inaugurate the new venture.

An honour it was, too, for what with Miklos Jansco (best known in London, I suppose, for his best film *The Roundup*) due to make his debut as a theatre director at The Twenty-Fifth Theatre, great, if cautious, hope is pinned on the place both as a nursery and a finishing school for new Hungarian dramatic writing.

At the moment, though, everybody is being studiedly vague about future plans and the theatre (which in fact is a very conventional proscenium arch affair in the premises of a youth organisation) is running *Mourning* for three performances a week only. And this in spite of the fact that it was received with enormous critical enthusiasm in Budapest's papers and periodicals—of which there are plenty.

Although the play was in fact adapted from a novel published some 30 years ago and set in rural Hungary reminiscent of *The Roundup* locations, I was in fact reminded of the Cacoyannis film *Zorba the Greek*. No doubt this was because the play's protagonist, who has virtually all its lines, is an Irene Papas role—an ostracised widow in black who spends the first half of the proceedings grieving the loss of her child.

I thought the director had done a superb job in evoking on a tiny stage the ritualistic and enclosed environment of a tiny Catholic village whose endless washing, gossiping and praying are stylistically choreographed in silhouette-emphasising lighting centred on what serves as a bed in the first half of the production and as a tomb in the second.

In spite of the fascination of the production's technical ingenuities and the fact that they were exercised on a community that was certainly not intended to be that of the 1970s, the contemporary

relevance of the play's theme of the individual's need for freedom and an enclosed society's need for conformity was not entirely lost on the perceptive.

As a matter of fact

NOT MYSELF being of an arithmetical turn of mind, I was puzzled by the name Twenty-Fifth Theatre since the Budapest guidebook was most specific in stating that the capital's two million citizens are served by 16 auditoria—all of them on the Pest side of the Danube.

A visit to the city's Theatre Institute brought a few vital statistics and clarification on this and much else besides. Apparently Hungary's 11-million population had been calculated to have a total of 24 permanent theatres. To us they may seem a bit thin on the ground till the realisation dawns that the entire Hungarian population is less than that of Greater London and the size of the country is roughly equal to that of the United Kingdom—minus Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Great Britain, then, can provide a misleading yardstick from the point of view of quantity if not of quality.

Equity, currently campaigning for better conditions for English actors, might at any rate be interested in how the profession is organised by the Hungarians. Entry in fact is restricted to the Budapest Academy of Theatre and Cinema where 700 candidates compete each year for a total actor-intake of 20 of which 12 are expected to survive a 4-year course. This over, the fledgling will become contracted to a particular company on a renewable two or five-year basis. He is, of course, much more likely to remain in the capital where the theatre is arranged on a seasonal basis—beginning in September and petering out in June and the heat of summer. Although theatres are open seven days a week (and nearly all begin as early as 7pm) the actor in fact makes two thirds of his income away from the stage in the remunerative fields of television (one channel, no colour), radio (more prestigious than telly work if not so well paid), films and dubbing. Actresses can retire on a pension at 55, actors at 60. In both cases the size of the pension cheque will relate to the artist's salary in the five years pre-

ceding his retirement. If an actor has a successful career he will not be able to buy himself an apartment in the capital (they're not purchasable) but he could well buy himself a nice little weekend retreat on Lake Balaton which, with the advent of the motorway and the cheap family car, becomes yearly more accessible.

Directors' Cinema & Actor's Theatre

WITH THE HELP of a tireless peripatetic simultaneous translator, I sampled a cross-section of Budapest theatre on an eight-day visit which also took in screenings of films by Janksco, Gaal, and Szabo among others.

I mention the films because my impression is that the Hungarian cinema is considerably more impressive than its theatre, and this has a lot to do with the fact that whilst in the sphere of the film the director is boss, in the theatre the actor counts for as much if not a great deal more.

Bill of fare

YOU WOULD THINK the fact that in Hungary the industrial and the technological revolutions overlap would provide the native dramatist with the sort of inexhaustible raw material that has inspired movie directors so spellbindingly to reflect the contortions of the country's political history—albeit often at one remove.

The fact that, as far as I could see, the theatre mirrored indigenous life so much less compellingly than the cinema certainly did not mean that Budapest's 17 theatres were empty. On the contrary they are all so packed you need to book at least three weeks beforehand. This, of course, may have something to do with the fact seats are priced so astonishingly low—five shillings to ten is the approximate cost range. Plays which might euphemistically be described as 'controversial' get moved to the most expensive end of the price bracket. And, of course, they are performed at those few theatres fortunate enough to have a second, experimental wing.

One of these is the Madách Theatre,

the main auditorium of which offered *Richard III*. The acting was of the bravura Shakespeare sort where performers exit with gestures that solicit applause and the public was of the kind that bestowed it. For me it was certainly an interesting experience to see Richard Crookback played to look even older than the cursing Margaret of Anjou. It was even more interesting to observe the ingenuity of the revival's set—a vast panelled wall just like a wooden safety-curtain at the rear of the stage. This proved to be infinitely manoeuvrable so that it could be totally reversed for some scenes or opened up to provide medieval alcoves and windows in another. In the parlance of a London-based theatregoer, you could say that this revival's acting belonged to the era of Donald Wolfit and its décor to that of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Elsewhere the bill of fare could hardly have been more varied. There were two satire theatres which I missed out on because—no matter how rapid and efficient your simultaneous translator—satire is something that can only be savoured by a native. And I'm sure this is always true even if Hungarian—a language so remote from our own—is not bedevilled by the class and regional variations which make English so hard to translate. This notwithstanding, there were English translations on view ranging from the Albee version of *Everything in the Garden* to a stage adaptation of *Paradise Lost*.

Russian classics were strongly represented (Gogol's *The Diary of a Madman*, Gorky's *The Lower Depths* and Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* spring most readily to mind). But that did not mean there was nothing from the West. *The Lusitanian Bogey* was playing to the sort of packed houses you would expect in London for *Hair* rather than Peter Weiss. Maybe that had something to do with the production's being somewhat more gentle than others I have seen like Giorgio Strehler's in Italy and the Negro Theatre Workshop's in the London World Theatre Season. The Hungarian production—both visually and score-wise—had an oriental flavour to it. And, as far as the play's colonial masters were concerned, I was much reminded of characters from a Somerset Maugham novel.

In some ways Budapest's National Theatre parallels our own in as far as its main auditorium is currently a refurbished but temporary venue pending the completion of the building of a new theatre. Apparently that won't be open until a couple of years after our own is due to be unveiled on the South Bank in 1973. Meantime I attended the opening at the Budapest National of a play by István Orkény called *The Dark Dove*. I was told that it had been on ice for some years since it dealt with the dissolution of Roman Catholic convents and monasteries in 1950 as well as reflecting the then current acute housing shortage. Unfortunately the play trivialised and sentimentalised these upheavals that I found it hard to hide my disgust at pro-

ceedings which were rather like *The Sound of Music* without any music.

If *The Dark Dove* ought to be put right back in the Hungarian fridge, István Csurka's *Who Footh the Bill?* deserves the attention of a good English translator. Sections of an early version of it can be read in *The New Hungarian Quarterly* (a publication I strongly recommend), but I think the piece as a whole would stand up in performance outside Hungary.

On the face of it, *Who Footh the Bill?* is an often funny two-act play about four men who play strip poker with a laughing seriousness that causes one of them to lose not only his shirt but his life. Below the surface, it is also a play about the game of life and the despair of a generation of Hungarians who hoped, played and lost.

But in the theatre, at least, there is now a new generation who still hope. Students of Hungarian theatre who want to see its drama flourish as its cinema has done must be pinning their faith on the Twenty Fifth Theatre. No doubt they at least would appreciate a chance to sample the best in world theatre on an international theatre festival platform like the Belgrade International Theatre Festival I was reporting on in last month's

P&P. It may be impertinent for an outsider to diagnose what may in fact be impracticable, but so great is the love of theatre in Hungary it really does deserve a Budapest International Theatre Festival. It also needs one.

You pays your money

'THE TIME HAS COME when an assessment must be made of what theatre today is about. Under the blanket protection of our so-called permissive society, nakedness, obscenities and perversions are, on the fringe of the theatre at least, becoming common-place. Already a foothold has been secured in the West End for the most widely publicised of these shows, and the lead thus offered must inevitably be followed by the depiction and, what is even worse, the placid acceptance of further depravities.'

*Editorial, page 16, The Stage,
October 22 1970*

'Boy and Girl Dancers, Classical or modern, PREPARED TO WORK NUDE, required for NEW AVANT-GARDE GLAMOUR SPECTACULAR . . .'

*Display Advertisement, page 22,
The Stage, October 22 1970*

TV DRAMA — from page 59

him. Levy paused and then let rip with the wittiest bon-mot ever invented. The guests were convulsed, and Levy made his greatest exit. He woke up, and, determined not to lose his finest gem, he wrote it down, and went back to sleep. Next morning he was telling his wife about the dream, and when he got to the punch-line he found he had forgotten it. All was not lost, however. He raced to his bedside-table, and there, on the pad, was written, 'And the same to you, with knobs on.' Someone should have told Osborne that story before he embarked on his unfortunate return to television after ten years' absence.

There are several things someone should also have told Ingmar Bergman and his director Alan Bridges. *The Lie* was a snail's pace effort to get across the grim Bergman cosmos in small screen terms. All the now-famous Bergman preoccupations with our contemporary urban neuroses were on muster and looking a little shop-worn and camera-tired. Lack of communication, lack of passion, lack of understanding, lack of fulfilment, etc., all the Seven Deadly Lacks were there. In his films Bergman pulls it all off because one accepts the fine detail and authenticity of the Swedish milieu he creates. Unfortunately *The Lie* took place in the totally implausible world of a high-quality TV commercial. It might have been meant to suggest universality, but, in fact, only suggested Benedictine and After Eights. I'm not knocking the relevance of the Deadly Lacks, but in making the

characters so rich, so bland and so upper-class, one wonders if the audience for 'The Largest Theatre in the World' could have made the remotest identification. Director Alan Bridges invested the whole thing with a crippling solemnity, some erotic passages of sublime idiocy, and the kind of trendy sound-track where the background noises drown out the dialogue. Next time I'm given the impression that the crackle of Harrods' wrapping-paper is more important than the dramatist's lines I shall switch off.

After 'Play for Today' this month's 'Play of the Month' could more suitably have been called 'Play for Yesterday'. We've had so much of T E Lawrence recently that for that normally estimable producer Cedric Messina to resurrect Rattigan's *Ross* seemed inexplicable. No expense was spared, however, on location work, and the fleet of camels certainly didn't come from Whipsnade. Ian McKellan had an off-night, alternating between nervous twitches and uneasy camp. I find the fact that private papers now show Lawrence to have been a crypto-Zionist far more interesting than whether or not he was bugged at Dera, but even for audiences more interested in sodomy than politics, *Ross* doesn't seem to have a lot to offer.

Dramatically, it has been a bad month for the BBC. Maybe it is because their drama departments have been infected with Dimbledom, the disease where presentation outstrips the thing presented. If you're going to march round the walls seven times blowing a trumpet, then the walls had better fall down.

NEW BOOKS

SHAKESPEARE by Anthony Burgess, Jonathan Cape, 75s

NO AUTHOR—not even Anthony Burgess—can publish a book with a title like the one this carries without offering both credentials and an explanation for adding yet another volume to the groaning and overcrowded shelf reserved for Books on the Bard.

'I have already written two imaginative works on Shakespeare—a novel (*Nothing Like the Sun*) composed somewhat hurriedly to celebrate in 1964 the quatercentenary of his birth, and a script for a more than epic-length Hollywood film of his life.' These are Mr Burgess' credentials. And here is his explanation of what he is after. 'This is not a book about Shakespeare's plays and poems. It is yet another attempt—the *n*th—to set down the main facts about the life and society from which the poems and plays arose . . . what I claim here is the right of every Shakespeare-lover who has ever lived to paint his own portrait of the man. One is short of the right paints and brushes and knows one is going to end up with a botched and inadequate picture, but here I have real pictures to help me out. Or, to put it another way, my task is to help the pictures.'

Well, Mr Burgess certainly does have real pictures. There are no less than 43 colour plates cunningly scattered amongst the book's 11 chapters all tersely headed—Home, School, Marriage, London, Shakescene, Patron and so forth. And, what is more, the many other illustrations which are not in the ravishing colour reproduction of the plates are captioned with a style and a compact, ironic, and succinctly informative edge that reflects the text of the biography here offered. A good example of the colour captions appears on page 120 and reads 'Sir Walter Raleigh, a

sun among men as soldier and courtier, explorer, historian, and father of nicotine, was suspected of wooing the moon goddess when he convened his "School of Night". And, on page 235, here is how a black and white print is explained: 'Here in the dispensary of Dr John Hall, Shakespeare's first son-in-law, medicines were pounded or brewed for the delectation, if not the cure, of his many patients.'

You may glean from even these brief quotations that, though the author may be a Shakespeare and an Elizabethan-lover, he is none the less able to observe the age with a certain amused detachment denied its passion's slave. In fact I very readily accept both the credentials and the explanation for writing this book since, quite apart from other virtues, the publishers have done an excellent art-work job on its 272 pages which makes it a joy to handle as well as being, at 75s, reasonably priced by today's spiralling charges.

Obviously, to the Dr Causabons of the Shakespeare literary scene, the book will have little to offer except as a brief refresher in the facts, figures, and personalities that shaped the life and the times that were Shakespeare's. But the information is served up with a literary elegance that is rare amongst the more academic accounts of the dramatist's life. And, for the layman or the non-specialist, the book offers the essentials of what you *really* need to know in a highly assimilable format that is neither a history lesson nor history got up as romantic fiction. I can imagine it is going, in fact, to solve the Christmas-present problem in quite a number of theatrical circles this December.

PETER BETTANY

BOOKS RECEIVED

Conversations with Eugene Ionesco. Edited by Claude Bonnefoy. Faber & Faber, 45s.
The Time of Laughter. By Corey Ford. A sentimental chronicle of the Twenties. Pitman, 30s.
Sarah Siddons. Portrait of an actress by Roger Manvell. Heinemann, 70s.
Merely Melville. An autobiography by Alan Melville. Hodder & Stoughton, 35s.
The Encore Reader. A chronicle of the new drama edited by Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale. Methuen Paperbacks, 20s.

SCRIPTS RECEIVED

ARRABAL. Plays Vol. 3. The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. The Grand Ceremonial. The Solemn Communion. Calder & Boyars, 40s.
JOHN BOWEN. The Corsican Brothers. Methuen Paperback, 12s.
MICHAEL FRAYN. The Two of Us. Four one-act plays. Fontana, 7s.
ANN JELLICOE. The Giveaway. Faber & Faber, 22s.
PLAYS OF THE YEAR. Edited by J C Trewin. Spithead by John Hale. In Celebration by David Storey. The Magistrate by Arthur Wing Pinero. Knight in Four Acts by John Harrison. Eleck, 35s.

LEEDS PLAYHOUSE

—from page 55

ton Court in Blenheim Terrace (opposite the university) where the company stayed at first. They like theatre people and if the rooms are tiny what do you want for 25s b&b? Or the Faversham on Springfield Mount has a licence for 32s 6d.

TRANSPORT:

BY CAR is easy for locals, but be warned that although you can see the Playhouse from the inner ring road, there is no direct access. The official, well-signposted route to the enormous cinder car park, is from the Headrow, (the city's main thoroughfare) up Calverley Street by the side of the town hall. If you nip across

the university car park from Woodhouse Lane I can't stop you.

For foreigners Leeds is about 40 miles from Manchester on the A62 through Oldham; about 190 miles from London up the M1 or A1. Ask for the Headrow and be careful of one-way spirals.

BY BUS. Locals should alight either at the town hall in Headrow or opposite the BBC in Woodhouse Lane. Foreigners will have to enquire of New York Street bus station (Leeds 0532 24376) or Victoria Coach Station in London (01-730 0202) because I couldn't rouse either of them.

BY RAIL. There are trains almost hourly at twenty-past from King's Cross (but check). The journey takes about three hours and the return fare is £6 8s.

BY AIR. There are four flights a day from Heathrow (two at weekends) taking about an hour to Leeds/Bradford airport at Yeadon—but that's about 10

miles out. It costs £14 14s return. Details from Rawdon 3271.

OTHER POINTS:

THE REGIONAL FILM THEATRE (local branch of the NFT) uses the Playhouse for late-night shows at 11 on Saturdays, Sunday evenings at 7.30. All seats 7s.

EXHIBITIONS in the foyer and up the stairs, currently showing paintings by Stass Paraskos (to December 12), a Cypriot living in Leeds.

THERE'S a bookstall in the foyer selling paperbacks, playscripts, books and magazines (including, of course, *P&P*), picture postcards and 'knick knacks'.

EVENINGS at 7.30, Saturday matinées at 3.00.

CANCER

Complete text

ACT I, SCENE ONE

The stage is dark. You can't see anything.

MIKE: I heard something. She definitely made a noise.

RUTH: Shut up.

MIKE: I'm telling you, I know the noise they make. That was it.

RUTH: For Chrissakes be quiet. You keep talking and she'll know we're here.

COOTIE: I was just thinking. I read somewhere about how they can see in the dark.

RUTH: I never read that.

COOTIE: No shit, I read they got these hundreds of thousands of millions of tiny, submicroscopic, photosensitive cells in each eyeball, so when it gets dark they can just turn on these cells and see like it was daytime.

MIKE: He's right, Ruth. Hey Cootie, you're right. I remember reading that in a back issue of the 'Vertebrate Review'.

COOTIE: That's it, that's the one. Special eyeball issue.

MIKE: Yeah, yeah. July.

RUTH: You guys must be pretty stupid if you believe that. What do you think they have whiskers for? The whole point of whiskers in the first place is so you can get around in the dark. That's why they stick out so far, so you don't bump into things. Chairs and refrigerators and that.

MIKE: Hey, shhhh. I think she's starting.

RUTH: Well you're the one that got me going about whiskers in the first place, so don't tell me shhhh.

MIKE: OK, OK, I'm sorry, OK?

RUTH: So shut up if she's starting.

COOTIE: (pause) How many kittens can they have at any one session?

MIKE: There's a recorded case of thirty-eight.

RUTH: Shhhh, for Chrissakes.

COOTIE: What I want to know is how are we gonna see her when she starts giving birth?

RUTH: Jesus, how stupid can you get? We'll turn on the light.

COOTIE: Yeah, but the whole thing is how do we know when to turn on the light. Like, what if we're too early?

MIKE: Or too late?

COOTIE: Yeah, what if we're too late?

MIKE: Or right in the middle . . .

COOTIE: Holy shit, yeah, what if we flip on the old lights when she's half way through a severe uterine contraction. She'll go apeshit and clamp up and kill the kitten. And if the kitty gets really lucky and wiggles free it'll grow up into a pretty fucked up animal.

MIKE: We're sewing the seeds of neurotic adult cathood . . .

COOTIE: . . . doo-wah, doo-wah . . .

RUTH: Hey, shut up, you guys, willya? Willya shut up?

COOTIE: We're just pointing out that's a shitty way to start life.

RUTH: I know the noise, all right?

MIKE: I think there's probably a more scientific way to watch a cat give birth.

By MICHAEL WELLER

RUTH: Everybody shut the fuck up.

(A long pause.)

NORMAN: How much longer are you guys gonna have the lights out?

COOTIE: Jesus Christ, Norman, why do you have to go creeping up like that? We forgot you were even in there.

NORMAN: I'm not creeping up. I'm just sitting here. Maybe you didn't notice when you came in, but I was reading this book. I mean, I thought you were only gonna have the lights out for maybe a few minutes or something, but you've already been in here for about an hour and . . . and I really can't read very well with the lights off. I mean . . . you know . . .

COOTIE: Norman, you can't rush a cat when it's giving birth. You try to rush a cat in those circumstances and you come smack up against nature.

MIKE: Norman . . .

NORMAN: What?

MIKE: Don't fight nature, Norman.

NORMAN: I'm not. I'm just trying to read this book.

COOTIE: (pause) Is it a good book?

RUTH: For Chrissakes, what's the matter with everyone?

NORMAN: I don't know. It's a pretty good book. I don't follow all of it. It's written in a funny kind of way so you forget a lot of it right after you've read it. A lot of guys in the Mathematics department say it's pretty good, I don't know though.

RUTH: Hey Norman, can't you go to your room if you want to read?

NORMAN: I don't want to.

COOTIE: Why not, Norman?

MIKE: Yeah, why do you want to creep around in here being all spooky and everything when you could just go to your room and read, huh?

CANCER received its first performance by the Royal Court Company in association with Martin Rosen and Nepenthe Productions Ltd at the Royal Court on September 14, 1970. Directed by Roger Hendricks Simon, designed by John Napier and with lighting by Andy Phillips, it had the following cast:

MIKE	.....	Seth Allen
COOTIE	.....	Davis Hall
RUTH	.....	Karen Ludwig
NORMAN	.....	Chuck Jones
DICK	.....	Richard Portnow
CATHY	.....	Mari Gorman
BOB	.....	Martin Shaw
RALPH/EFFING	.....	Chris Malcolm
WILLIS	.....	George Margo
LUCKY	.....	Andrew Neil
SHELLY	.....	Cara Duff-MacCormick
BREAM/MILKMAN	David Healy
MURRY/PLUMBER	Al Mancini
SANTA CLAUS	Ann Way
THE CAT	'Elinor Glyn'

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NORMAN: I don't know.

COOTIE: We may be in here for hours and hours, Norman. Maybe even all night. The whole operation from initial labour to the biting off of the umbilical cord could very easily take an entire night. (Pause) Norman?

NORMAN: All night, huh?

COOTIE: You never know.

RUTH: Brother, you try to get a few guys to shut up for a little while . . .

MIKE: (loud) C'mon, c'mon, hey everybody, let's have a little quiet around here. I don't want to see anyone panic and lose their heads and start running in all different directions knocking down passers-by and trampling on innocent women and children.

RUTH: I swear to Christ, Mike, if you don't shut up I'll kill you.

MIKE: OK.

(At this point the hall door opens and the kitchen is lit up a little. DICK is standing in the doorway trying to see into the dark where NORMAN is sitting at a round kitchen table with a book by him and RUTH, MIKE and COOTIE are crouched around a cardboard carton with a hole in it. NORMAN grabs up his book to take advantage of the crack of light. DICK just stands there. RUTH and COOTIE speak on top of each other.)

RUTH: Hey, c'mon, shut the door, Dick.

COOTIE: Shut the fucking door.

MIKE: (after a pause) We'd really like you to shut the door, Richard.

(DICK shuts the door and everything goes black again. A moment later it all lights up again because DICK has just opened the ice-box and it's the kind that has an automatic light inside. So now we see DICK squatting in front of the ice-box while the others watch him, except for NORMAN, who's really trying like mad to read. You can see the kitchen pretty clearly now. The ice-box is very old, dating from the time when electricity was replacing the ice-man. It's just a box on legs with one of those barrel shaped coolers with vents on top. You maybe can't see it yet, but on the door of the ice-box there's a large inscription that reads 'GOD IS COOL'. Stacked neatly against one wall are 816 empty two-quart milk bottles, layer upon layer with planks between each level. It's a deliberate construction. There's a huge copper stack heater in one corner by the sink and it has a safety valve at the top with a copper tube coming out of it and snaking into the sink. The floor is vinyl, in imitation cork, alternating light and dark, but the conspicuous thing about this floor is that it's only half finished. Where the cork tiles end there is a border of black tar, by now hard, and then wood floor in broad plank. Around the kitchen table are six chairs, all from different sets. Various posters on the wall, but none as conspicuous as a map of Europe on the wall where the telephone hangs. The sink is full of dirty dishes. There is a pad hanging on the ice-box, and a pencil. Everyone uses the kitchen in a special way. So DICK is squatting in front of the open ice-box.)

RUTH: That's very cute, Richard.

MIKE: C'mon, shut the fucking ice-box. We were in here first.

NORMAN: I was reading when you guys came in.

(DICK turns to them, looks, then turns back to the ice-box.)

COOTIE: Dick, in my humble opinion you're a miserable cunt and a party pooper.

DICK: (standing) All right, now listen. This afternoon I went down to the Star Supermarket and got myself four dozen frozen hamburgers. Now that's 48 hamburgers, and I only had two of them for dinner tonight.

RUTH: And you never washed up.

MIKE: Hey, Dick, are those Star hamburgers any good?

DICK: Listen, I should have 46 hamburgers, and when I counted just now there was only 43. Three hamburgers in one night. And for your information I've been keeping track of my hamburgers since the beginning of the semester. There's almost fifty hamburgers I can't account for.

COOTIE: Jesus, Dick, you should have said something before this.

MIKE: Yeah, Dick, you had all them hamburger thefts on your mind, you should have let it out. It's no good keeping quiet about something like that.

DICK: Look, I'm not about to make a stink about a couple of hamburgers here and there, but Jesus Christ, almost sixty of them. I'm putting it down on common stock and we're gonna all pay for it.

(DICK turns on the light.)

RUTH: Dick, willya turn out the light, please.

DICK: I'm sorry, but I've lost too many hamburgers. I'm putting down for four dozen.

(He goes to the pad on the wall and makes an entry.)

RUTH: Now willya turn the light out?

DICK: (examining list) Shit, who put peanut butter down on common stock?

MIKE: I did. I got a jar of chunky last Thursday and when I opened it on Saturday somebody'd already been in there. I didn't eat all that chunky myself.

DICK: Well I never had your peanut butter. I'm not paying for it.

MIKE: Well I never had any of your goddamn sixty hamburgers either.

COOTIE: I think I may have had some of that chunky peanut butter. Could you describe your jar of chunky in detail?

MIKE: Elegant little glass jar, beige interior . . .

(KATHY enters through the front door, as opposed to the hall door. The front door leads to outside and to the bathroom. The hall door leads to everyone's rooms.)

KATHY: Oh boy, look out for Bob.

(She starts across the kitchen to the hall door. She carries lots of books in a green canvas waterproof book-bag slung over her shoulder.)

RUTH: What's wrong with Bob?

KATHY: He's in a really shitty mood. I've seen the guy act weird before. This is, I don't know, pretty bad, I guess.

MIKE: Where is he?

COOTIE: Yeah, where's Bob?

MIKE: Good old Bob.

COOTIE: Where's good old Bob?

KATHY: And fuck you too. I'm serious.

NORMAN: (looking up from his book) Boy, I really can't absorb very much with everyone talking.

KATHY: We were just sitting there, you know, in Hum 105, and that prick Johnson started in about the old cosmic equation again.

NORMAN: What's the cosmic equation?

RUTH: So why'd that upset Bob?

KATHY: I don't know. That's the thing . . .

DICK: I bet Bob's responsible for some of my hamburgers, I notice you and him never go shopping for dinner.

KATHY: It's really weird the way he sort of . . . well, like today, you know . . . well, I mean, haven't you noticed it?

MIKE: Look, Kathy, you're never gonna find out what's troubling Bob unless you can get him to admit whether or not . . . (Thinking) . . . well . . .

KATHY: What?

MIKE: Well, if he's been hanging around Lake Kariba.

KATHY: What?

COOTIE: Yeah, that's right, there's an epidemic of shistosomiasis up round Lake Kariba country . . .

KATHY: Oh, you fucking guys . . .

MIKE: Kathy, you don't wanna go ignoring a possibility like that. It can be pretty serious if it isn't treated immediately.

COOTIE: Yeah, there's these giant snails round the marshes that lie in ambush and jump on to passers-by.

MIKE: They don't jump.

COOTIE: They do.

MIKE: Catapult.

COOTIE: Oh, yeah.

MIKE: See, they work in teams of two. One of them holds back the blade of grass between his teeth while the other one crawls up onto the end and on a given signal the holder opens his mouth and . . . thwock . . . right onto you and you get these microscopic parasites in your blood stream . . .

COOTIE: And your liver shrivels up . . . you turn yellow . . .

MIKE: You start mixing tenses . . .

COOTIE: Dropping split infinitives and dangling metaphors left, right and centre and . . . and . . .

RUTH: You finished?

COOTIE: You?

MIKE: Yeah, you?

COOTIE: Yeah.

MIKE: We're finished.

KATHY: (ignores them) I know the guy. He's never like this. He's just . . . christ, I'm not kidding, he might be cracking up or some-

thing.

(BOB enters through the front door carrying his books. He looks all right. Everyone stares at him.)

RUTH: Hi Bob.

MIKE: Hi Bob.

COOTIE: Hi Bob.

NORMAN: Hello Bob.

BOB: (pause) Hi Mike, Hi Ruth, Hi Cootie, hello Norman. (Pause) Hi Dick.

DICK: Listen, do you know anything about . . .

BOB: No, I haven't touched your fucking hamburgers.

DICK: Well someone has.

MIKE: How you been, good old Bob?

COOTIE: How's the old liver and the old pancreas and the old pituitary and the . . .

BOB: Is there any mail?

COOTIE: There's this really big package from Beirut. It took four guys to get it up the stairs.

MIKE: We think it's a harp.

RUTH: There's a letter in your room.

(BOB looks at them quizzically then goes down the hall. KATHY follows him.)

NORMAN: He sure gets a lot of letters. I wonder if he writes a lot?

COOTIE: The thing to do if you want to get a lot of mail is start a chain letter.

NORMAN: How do you do that?

MIKE: You never heard of chain letters?

NORMAN: No.

MIKE: You should've heard of them. They're a great way to get letters. I started one once and I think I got about four hundred and eight letters in two months.

COOTIE: If you do it right you're supposed to get a thousand.

MIKE: I would've got a thousand but I moved. The guy that stayed in the apartment got five hundred and ninety two letters.

COOTIE: You should've left a forwarding address.

MIKE: Shit. I never thought of that.

RUTH: I think Kathy's right. There's definitely something wrong with Bob.

DICK: Yeah, he's out of his fucking mind, that's what's wrong with him.

RUTH: You can talk.

NORMAN: Is that where you write to, say 'n' people and tell them all to write to 'n' people until it . . .

MIKE: Yeah, and you can put something in the letters, like a dollar or two dollars or band-aids or a picture of Liberace . . .

RUTH: Jesus Christ, what the hell's wrong with everyone around here?

MIKE: Hey, c'mon, c'mon, let's have a little order around here . . .

RUTH: Stop fucking around. You heard what Kathy said. Something's troubling Bob.

MIKE: So what?

COOTIE: Yeah, fuck Bob.

MIKE: Fuck good old Bob.

NORMAN: Maybe he's worried about the future. (All look at him) I mean, you know, maybe he's worried about it. I mean, I don't know him all that well. Just, you know, maybe he's worried about what he's gonna do when, you know, after he graduates and everything.

DICK: He ought to be worried.

MIKE: You bet your ass he oughta be. Same goes for all of you guys. You oughta be worried Dick. Cootie, you oughta be worried. I oughta be worried. I am. I'm fucking petrified. You watch what happens at the graduation ceremony. There's gonna be this line of green military buses two miles long parked on the road outside and they're gonna pick us up and take us to Vietnam and we'll be walking around one day in the depths of the rain forest looking out for wily enemy snipers and carnivorous insects and tropical snakes that can eat a whole moose in one gulp and earthworms sixteen feet long and then one day when we least expect it this wily sniper'll leap out from behind a blade of grass and powie. Right in the head. (Serious) I'm worried.

DICK: Anyone that can spell can get out of Vietnam.

NORMAN: I'm in graduate school. They can't get me.

DICK: Norman, you couldn't buy your way into the army.

NORMAN: I wouldn't go.

MIKE: Why wouldn't you go, Norman?

NORMAN: Huh?

COOTIE: Yeah, think of the army. What about them. They need good graduate students out there in the marshes of Quac Thop Chew Hoy Ben Van Pho Quay Gup Trin.

NORMAN: I don't agree with the war.

MIKE: Well, for God sakes then, let's stop it.

NORMAN: I had my medical and everything. I passed. I could've pretended I was insane or something.

DICK: Pretended?

RUTH: Hey, doesn't anyone here give a shit about Bob.

MIKE: Hey, c'mon, everyone that gives a shit raise your hand.

(COOTIE, MIKE, DICK and NORMAN raise their hands.)

See, we all give a shit. So what should we do?

RUTH: Well, I don't know. Maybe we ought to try and find out what's troubling him.

DICK: Maybe he doesn't want us to know. Just maybe.

COOTIE: Yeah, what if he's teetering on the brink of a complete schizophrenic withdrawal and the only thing keeping him sane is knowing we don't know what's troubling him.

MIKE: It's our duty as classmates and favourite turds to leave him alone.

RUTH: Maybe something's wrong between him and Kathy.

DICK: Like what?

RUTH: I don't know. That's what I'm asking.

DICK: He doesn't give a shit about her. Not really. She's just a good lay, that's all.

RUTH: How would you know, Dick?

NORMAN: I thought they were in love.

DICK: Jesus, Norman, where the hell is your head at?

NORMAN: Huh?

MIKE: Define the problem, then solve it.

COOTIE: Yeah, what's troubling good old Bob?

MIKE: I think we oughta all go to bed tonight with notebooks under our pillows, and when we get a well focused and comprehensive idea about the central dilemma of Bob's existence we oughta write it down in clear, concise sentences, with particular attention to grammar and punctuation.

COOTIE: Yeah, then we can meet in here tomorrow and pool our insights.

MIKE: That's a really great plan.

RUTH: I'd really like to know what's troubling him.

DICK: I'd really like to know who the fuck is eating my hamburgers.

NORMAN: Why don't you talk to him?

RUTH: What?

NORMAN: I mean, you know; Bob. If you want to find out what's troubling him probably the best thing to do is talk to him and say what's troubling you or something like that and then if he wants to tell you he can and if he doesn't feel like talking about it . . . then . . . well, you know . . .

RUTH: Yeah, maybe I'll do that.

NORMAN: (pause) Yeah, that's what I'd do if I wanted to know, I mean, I'm not saying I wouldn't like to know what's troubling him. I'd really like to know if you find out, but I . . .

(MIKE has been kneeling by the cat box and peering into it.)

MIKE: Jesus Christ. Jesus H. Fucking Christ.

NORMAN: What's wrong?

MIKE: She wasn't even in there.

COOTIE: What! All that time we were looking at an empty box and she wasn't even in there.

MIKE: She must've slipped out while we had our backs turned.

COOTIE: Sneaky little beastie.

MIKE: Cootie, you don't understand. She might be out there in the road right now.

COOTIE: Right now.

MIKE: With all the traffic.

COOTIE: Oh Christ, and all those architects driving home drunk from seeing their mistresses . . .

MIKE: And trying to figure out what to tell the little woman. I mean, she's been waiting up all night in a chartreuse quilted sleeping gown with curlers in her hair.

COOTIE: Worrying about the kiddies. Three boys; twenty-seven girls. They got appendicitis . . .

MIKE: Simultaneously. And when she called the kindly family doctor he was away in Cuba . . .

COOTIE: Doing research for his forthcoming book . . .

MIKE: Chapter eight: 'Peritonitis and Social Democracy.'

COOTIE: Jesus, I hope we're not too late.

(COOTIE and MIKE rush off down the hall.)

DICK: Hey, Norman, are these your bananas?

NORMAN: You can have one, I don't mind.

(DICK takes one and puts the others back in the ice-box. COOTIE sticks his head in around the hall door.)

COOTIE: You coming, Ruth?

RUTH: No.

COOTIE: Your heart is full of bitterness and hate, Ruth.

(COOTIE's head disappears again.)

DICK: You done the essay for Phil 720?

RUTH: No.

DICK: It's due tomorrow.

RUTH: Yeah?

DICK: Yeah.

NORMAN: Is that a good course, Philosophy 720?

RUTH: Nope. Professor Quinn is an albino dwarf queer with halitosis and he smokes too much.

DICK: He does not.

RUTH: Three packs of Pall Mall a day is too much. He's gonna die of cancer.

DICK: He's a genius.

RUTH: You have a thing about queers.

DICK: Fuck off, Ruth.

RUTH: You started it.

(RUTH goes into hall. DICK stands and eats his banana, chewing slowly. NORMAN tries to read but DICK's presence distracts him.)

DICK: How come you're reading that book?

NORMAN: I don't know. It's supposed to be pretty good.

DICK: What are you gonna do when you finish it?

NORMAN: (thinks) I'll start another one.

DICK: Yeah, but what happens when you forget this one. I mean, it'll be as if you hadn't even read it, so what's the point?

NORMAN: Oh, I don't know. I happen to believe you learn things even when you don't know it. Like, if you're reading something right now . . . I mean, I am reading something right now and maybe I'll forget it in a while . . . I mean, I'm forgetting a lot of it already, but I happen to believe I'm being altered in lots of ways I may not be aware of because of . . . well, you know, books and experiences. (Pause) Life.

DICK: That's what you believe, huh?

NORMAN: Um, yes, I believe that.

(MIKE and COOTIE enter wearing heavy winter parkas and boots. They look like trappers.)

COOTIE: Boy, if we're too late I hate to think of all the dead cats we'll have on our conscience.

MIKE: You gonna help, Dick.

DICK: Fuck off.

MIKE: How about you, Norman, aren't you gonna do your bit for the world of cats?

NORMAN: I'm just in the middle of this chapter.

(MIKE and COOTIE shake their heads in disapproval and rush out. NORMAN tries to read again as DICK eats the banana, watching him.)

NORMAN: Hey, it's really hard to read, you know, when someone's watching you and everything.

DICK: Don't you ever get the feeling you're really irrelevant?

NORMAN: I don't think so.

DICK: (in one breath) I mean, you go into the mathematics department every day and sit there looking out the window and thinking about cars and women and every now and then a couple of numbers come into your head and there's all these Chinese guys running around solving all the problems worth solving while you sit there wondering what the hell you're doing.

NORMAN: No, it's not like that. Well, you know, it's not that simple. I mean . . . (Pause) I guess it's a lot like that. Are you doing anything relevant?

DICK: You can't get more relevant than Far Eastern studies. Ask me anything about the Far East and I'll tell you the answer. That's where everything's happening. China, Vietnam, Japan, Korea. You name it.

NORMAN: I guess I ought to know more about those things. I don't know, I keep thinking there's a lot of things I should know about.

DICK: The thing is, Norman, the way I see it, you're already deeply committed to the system. You take away Black ghettos, stop the

war in Vietnam, distribute the wealth equally throughout the country and you wouldn't be in graduate school.

NORMAN: How come?

DICK: You see, you don't know anything about what makes it all work, do you?

(DICK throws the banana peel into the cat box.)

NORMAN: Hey, you shouldn't throw that in there.

DICK: Why not?

NORMAN: Well, I mean, that's the box for the cat. Maybe she won't want to have kittens on a banana peel.

DICK: Norman, how long have you been living here?

NORMAN: Well, you know, about three months. A little longer maybe. About three months and two weeks altogether.

DICK: Have you ever seen a cat around here?

NORMAN: Well, I don't know. I'm out a lot of the time.

DICK: Norman, there is no fucking cat. We haven't got a cat. Boy, for a graduate student you got a lot to learn.

(DICK starts out but turns to look NORMAN over a last time and say . . .)

Jesus.

(Then he's gone down the hall. NORMAN kneels by the cat-box and examines it as some muffled piano chords fill the silence. It's BOB playing a lazy, rich, drifting progression, moody Bill Evans style. KATHY walks through the kitchen in a man's robe carrying a towel. She lights the stack heater. From inside the hall we hear DICK's voice yelling.)

DICK: STOP PLAYING THAT FUCKING NOISE. I'M TRYING TO READ. HEY BOB.

(KATHY goes to the hall door and yells down.)

KATHY: Mind your own goddam business, Richard.

(A door slams, and the music, which had stopped momentarily starts again, but louder.)

(turning) Hey listen, Norman. If you're gonna be in here for a while could you do me a favour and make sure no one turns off the water heater 'cause I'm just taking a shower. And if you get a chance could you put on some coffee 'cause I'll be coming out in about ten minutes and I'd like a cup when I come out, OK?

NORMAN: Do you have any books on Vietnam?

KATHY: (pause) Yeah. A few.

NORMAN: Are they good books?

KATHY: Well, you know, some are, some aren't. Why?

NORMAN: I just, you know, wondered, that's all.

(KATHY watches NORMAN go to the stove and fumble around with the coffee percolator. She shrugs and goes out the front door. We hear the bathroom door close and moments later the sound of a shower running.)

Actually, I've been thinking I'd like to read some books about Vietnam. I mean it's been going on all this time. I don't know, though. I've never read any books about it. Maybe if I could read one book, then I'd know a little more about it and I could decide if I wanted to read another. Would it be OK if I borrowed one of your books to start with? I'd give it back as soon as I finished it. (He looks around and sees he's alone. He goes out the front door. We hear the bathroom door opening and a yell.)

KATHY: Goddamnit, Norman, what are you doing in here.

NORMAN: I was wondering if you'd lend me . . .

KATHY: Hey, get the hell out of here, I'm taking a shower.

(A door slams.)

NORMAN: I just wanted to know if it was okay for me to borrow one of those books about Vietnam.

KATHY: Well, Jesus Christ, can't you wait till I'm done?

NORMAN: Oh . . . yeah, I'm sorry. (Pause) Is that all right with you?

KATHY: Hey, don't stand around out there. You can borrow as many goddamn books as you want only get away from the door 'cause it just so happens I don't like a lot of people standing around outside the bathroom door while I'm washing.

(NORMAN comes back into the kitchen. He fixes a little more of the coffee, then goes to the hall door and yells down the hallway.)

NORMAN: I'll just make the coffee first and when you're finished in there I'll come down to your room with you and get the book. Hey, listen, if you decide to have your coffee in here, could you go down to your room first and bring the book in with you? Yes, that's probably better. Hey, is that OK? (Pause) Hey, is that OK? (No answer. NORMAN is left baffled as the lights dim and BOB's piano chords keep going and going.)

END OF SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

(It's a few days later. NORMAN is reading. RUTH is making sandwiches and COOTIE and MIKE are rolling up a banner.)

COOTIE: I don't know about the wording.

MIKE: I think it's pretty good wording.

COOTIE: I'm not too happy about it.

MIKE: You're unhappy about the wording.

COOTIE: Well, I'm not, you know, cut up about it or anything, but I'm definitely not as happy as I could be about it.

MIKE: Ruthie, we need an impartial third voice over here.

RUTH: Who wants orange marmalade?

MIKE: I'd like an orange marmalade.

COOTIE: I want two orange marmalade and one chunky peanut butter, please.

RUTH: How 'bout you, Norman?

COOTIE: And I wouldn't mind a chunky peanut butter and orange marmalade mixed.

RUTH: Hey, Norman, do you want sandwiches or not?

COOTIE: You gotta have sandwiches handy if you're coming, Norman. On your average march you'll find you get through a good two peanut butter and jellies before you even get to where you're supposed to demonstrate, and then after circling round and yelling militant slogans at the monument or park or poison gas plant or nuclear missile establishment for a couple of hours, you're just about ready for another peanut butter and jelly.

MIKE: Or cream cheese and olives.

COOTIE: Bacon, lettuce and tomato, I mean, I know you meet a lotta pretty groovy people at these marches, but you can't count on them having extra sandwiches for a new acquaintance.

RUTH: Hey, Norman, willya please tell me if you're coming with us or not?

NORMAN: (unfriendly) I'm going with Dick.

COOTIE: You're lucky there. You'll get hamburger on toasted roll if you go with Dick. He takes sterno and cooks right out there in the middle of lines of charging cops and tear gas and mace and everything.

(DICK enters.)

MIKE: Hey, Dick, you better hurry up and get dressed for the march.

COOTIE: Yeah, Dick, you don't want to be late or all the best ass'll be grabbed up.

DICK: (indicating banner) What's it say?

COOTIE: 'Buy Government bonds.'

MIKE: 'Plant an avocado today and have a fruit bearing tree in six years.'

RUTH: You want some of our peanut butter and marmalade?

MIKE: What's this about giving away all our peanut butter and marmalade all of a sudden? He wouldn't give us any of his lousy hamburgers. We had to pay for those hamburgers on common stock.

DICK: Where's Kathy and Bob?

MIKE: Yeah, where's good old Bob? (Yells) HEY, YOU GUYS. ARE YOU COMING?

KATHY: (inside) Yeah, hold on a minute, willya?

MIKE: They're coming.

COOTIE: Hey Norman, I been watching you pretty closely for the last few days and I have this definite impression you've been displaying hostility towards me, Mike and Ruth, in that order.

NORMAN: I'm just reading this book . . .

COOTIE: Don't be negative, Norman. You're trying to pretend I hadn't noticed your emotions. You happen to be up against a disciple of Freud, Jung, Adler, Pavlov, Skinner and the honourable L. Ron Hubbard, to mention but a few. It just so happens I can detect subatomic trace particles of hostility within a six mile radius of anywhere I am.

MIKE: It's no use contradicting him, Norman. If he says he can feel hostility, that's it. I mean, even I can feel it and I'm only moderately sensitive to hostility up to about a hundred eighty yards.

NORMAN: I'm not feeling hostile . . .

COOTIE: You're not only feeling it, you're dying to tell us about it. That's a basic axiom of hostility.

NORMAN: Oh, boy, you guys.

DICK: Leave him alone.

COOTIE: Dick, that's the worse thing you can do. I know you think you're being a good shit and everything, but if the guy is

riddled with hostility and he doesn't get it out of his system it's gonna go haywire and zing all around inside his body 'til he's twenty-eight years old and then he'll get Cancer.

RUTH: You know, we're gonna be really late if those guys don't hurry up . . .

MIKE: That reminds me of a guy I was reading about. He got so pent up with hostility his head fell right down inside his body, no shit, that's what I was reading, right down between his shoulders.

COOTIE: Fell?

MIKE: Yeah, straight down 'til all you could see was these two little eyeballs peering out over his collar bone.

COOTIE: Mike.

MIKE: What, Mel?

COOTIE: (pause) Fell?

MIKE: (pause) Sank?

COOTIE: Subsided.

MIKE: Right.

COOTIE: In fact, as I remember it, his head eventually disappeared completely.

MIKE: Don't rush me, I'm coming to that. Now, Norman, I want you to pay very close attention because this case is a lesson in itself. You see, everybody used to warn this particular guy to loosen up and maybe see an analyst, but the guy refused on the grounds that it would cost too much, and that turned out to be really stupid economy, because with his head inside him like that he couldn't see anything and he had to hire a guy, full time, seven days a week, to lead him around. The guy was so tight with his money he tries to solve the problem by rigging up this ingenious system of mirrors, like a periscope, but the natural movements of his body kept knocking the mirrors out of alignment, so in addition to the guy that led him around, he had to hire another guy, full time, seven days a week, to keep readjusting the mirrors. You can imagine the expense involved.

COOTIE: There was a very fine article about that guy in the hostility journal, spring number. Did you happen to catch that article, Norman?

NORMAN: I'm not listening.

MIKE: Did it tell about what happened to him?

COOTIE: Well, it was one of those stories in two parts, and wouldn't you know it, that's just when my subscription ran out.

MIKE: Oh well, you missed the best part. You see, when his head got down as f . . . subsided as far as his stomach . . .

COOTIE: . . . thank you . . .

MIKE: . . . he went and hired a top-notch transplant surgeon to replace his bellybutton with a flexible, clear-plastic window so he could see where he was going.

COOTIE: Jumpin' Jehosephat!

MIKE: And I'm happy to announce, the operation was a complete success.

COOTIE: Fantastic! No problems with rejection or anything?

MIKE: Nope. The Dow Chemical Company set up a ten man, two woman research team and they developed a type of clear-plastic window that matched the guy's antibodies perfectly. In a matter of weeks, the guy was able to live a completely normal life again, skin diving, stamp collecting, a lot of political work . . . He could even go to the movies when he felt like it but he had to sit up on the back of the seat and it caused a lot of hard feeling with the people sitting directly behind him. But that's the great thing about the average movie-going audience; they respected his infirmity.

COOTIE: Fuck a duck.

MIKE: Shut up, sonny boy, I ain't finished yet.

COOTIE: There's more?

MIKE: Yeah, you see, the really incredible thing was when the guy woke up one morning and realised his head was still sinking . . .

COOTIE: . . . subsiding . . .

MIKE: . . . and he went to this doctor to check it out. He was just walking along, you know, and when he got to this corner to stop for a red light a dog peed on his leg, and when he bent forward to see what was making his pants wet a guy up on some scaffolding right behind dropped a pipe wrench on his back, and the impact of this wrench, plus the slightly inclined position of the guy's upper body, knocked his head back into place.

COOTIE: Hot diggity!

MIKE: Well, the guy went apeshit, jumping all over the place,

singing songs right out there on the streets . . . and that's just when it all had to happen. This poor guy, after all his suffering, was finally looking forward to a happy and productive life . . .

COOTIE: Oh, shit, yeah, I remember now. The poor son of a bitch.

MIKE: Yeah, you 'member, he was just standing out there in the street stopping traffic in both directions, tears of humble gratitude streaming down his cheeks and some stupid . . .

(He sees KATHY and BOB standing in the hallway door ready for the march.)

. . . oh, Hi Bob, Hi Kathy.

RUTH: Hey, do you guys want some of our peanut butter and marmalade?

BOB: I've got an announcement.

COOTIE: We used to have a near-sighted canary . . .

RUTH: Listen, I gotta make these sandwiches and we're gonna end up short if I don't get some co-operation around here.

COOTIE: Hey, Norman hasn't even got a banner. Norman, aren't you gonna bring a banner?

BOB: Well, willya please shut up. I'm trying to tell you guys something.

COOTIE: Well, fuck you, I'm talking to Norman. You want him to get all the way down to the demonstration and they disqualify him 'cause he doesn't have a banner.

RUTH: Everyone is gonna fucking well eat whatever I make.

DICK: You want some help.

RUTH: Look, it's not like I don't know how to make sandwiches . . .

MIKE: Hey, everyone, c'mon, c'mon, let's have a little order around here. Everybody stay where you are and don't panic. OK, Bob, I think we got everything under control now.

BOB: Thank you.

MIKE: That's OK Bob.

BOB: I've just got this . . .

MIKE: Bob?

BOB: What?

MIKE: Anytime.

BOB: What?

MIKE: Anytime you want a little peace and quiet so you can make an announcement without a lot of people talking over you, just ask me and I'll do what I can for you.

BOB: Thank you, Mike.

MIKE: That's OK, Bob, you're a good shit.

(BOB hesitates, trying to find words to frame his vague thoughts. When he speaks, it is halting . . .)

BOB: Look . . . I just thought maybe it was about time somebody around here . . .

MIKE: Do you want some water or anything?

RUTH: Oh for Chrissake shut up, Mike.

COOTIE: (cooling things) Yeah, shut yer mouth, sonny-boy, yer creatin' a public nuisance.

RUTH: Go on, Bob.

BOB: No, no, look, all I want to say is . . . Norman, if there is one way to remain irrelevant and ineffective it's to sit with your nose buried in a book while life is raging all around you.

(NORMAN looks up and closes his book.)

Thank you. OK. Announcement . . .

(BOB walks around the room, again trying to think of how to put it. As he starts to speak . . .)

MIKE: Earthquakes in Singapore . . .?

RUTH: (incredible rage) SHUT UP!

BOB: Never mind.

MIKE: Sorry. I'm sorry.

KATHY: What's wrong, Bob?

BOB: Really, nothing, nothing at all. I just had this stupid thought the other day in Humanities. Johnson was saying something idiotic, as usual, and I just started to watch him carefully for the first time talking to us, you know, thirty kids who think he's a prick, and I realised that he probably thinks all of us are pricks . . . and I just started to wonder what the fuck we're all doing. You know what I mean? What the fuck are we all doing, seriously, tell me, I'd really like to know . . . in twenty-five words or less . . . No, no, sorry, come on, carnival time. Let's go marching.

KATHY: I found the letter, Bob.

BOB: What letter?

(KATHY takes an official letter out of her bag.)

Kathy, where the hell did you get that? Come on, give it here.

KATHY: We're supposed to be like all together in here. If you can't say it yourself I'll say it for you.

(BOB is momentarily confused, then realises that KATHY thinks he was trying to tell everyone about the letter. He finds the situation absurd, annoying and funny.)

BOB: Kathy, that letter has nothing to do with anything and it's none of your business and would you please give it back. (KATHY hands the letter to RUTH. RUTH reads.)

RUTH: Oh, fuck.

(RUTH holds the letter on. Each reads in turn. It ends in MIKE's hands. BOB waits impatiently as the letter makes its round. He's embarrassed and then begins to find it funny that everyone, especially KATHY, has construed the letter as his problem. MIKE is by now looking quite seriously at him.)

BOB: (laughing it off) It's just for the physical. I mean, I'm not dead yet.

(As he says this, something amusing passes through BOB's mind and he stops talking. He turns the thought over in his mind. MIKE is looking at the letter again. The others watch BOB.)

MIKE: They mis-spelled your name?

(BOB comes out of his brief daydream.)

BOB: Huh?

MIKE: Jobert.

BOB: (amused) Oh yeah.

MIKE: Jobert Rettie. Dear Jobert Rettie. Hi Jobert.

BOB: Hi Jike.

MIKE: Good old Jobert.

COOTIE: How ya feelin' good old Jobert.

BOB: Dead, how 'bout you?

(MIKE sees what's happening and comes to the rescue.)

MIKE: (pause) Hi Jel.

COOTIE: Hi, Jike.

MIKE: Hi Jorman.

NORMAN: Huh?

MIKE: Hi Jorman.

NORMAN: Oh, hi.

MIKE: Hi Jathy, hi Jick.

DICK: Fuck off.

MIKE: Juck off? Why should I juck off, Jick?

(The doorbell rings. COOTIE rushes over and answers it. At the door, a young man in a suit and tie and horn-rimmed glasses and attache-case which he has concealed just out of sight behind the door-frame.)

COOTIE: Hi Jister.

MIKE: Ask him his name, Jel.

COOTIE: What's your name?

RALPH: Ralph.

COOTIE: Hi Jalph, I'm Jel and that's Jathy, Jorman, Jike, Jick and Job and we're just on our way down to city hall to beat the shit out of some cops. Wanna come?

(RALPH pauses momentarily, then launches his pitch.)

RALPH: I'm from the University of Buffalo and I'm in the neighbourhood doing market research. You don't mind my asking you a few questions, do you?

(As he says this last bit, he reaches down, takes up his concealed attache-case, bends his head down, like making ready for a dive, and advances swiftly but deliberately into the middle of the room. This swift movement, plus the running patter, is designed to force the average housewife to back away and give ground, but since COOTIE merely steps aside when RALPH bends down for his attache-case, we are treated to the entire technique out of context. RALPH ends up in the middle of the room, still bent over, motionless. He looks up and around and straightens himself, laughing nervously at everyone watching him.)

RALPH: Do all you people live here?

MIKE: No, we're just using the place for a few days. This is a fantastic coincidence because the guy that lives here just went away for a few days to do a series of special guest lectures at the University of Buffalo.

RALPH: Really? No kidding. That's some coincidence, huh? That's really a fantastic coincidence. Well, ahhh, here's what I'd like to do. I'd like to interview one of you people. I'll choose one of you at random and everybody else can listen and if the guy I choose has a particular opinion that differs significantly from what the rest of you believe, we'll just stop and take a consensus, OK? Hey, you guys all work, don't you? I mean, you're not students or anything?

COOTIE: We mostly hold various government jobs.

RALPH: I see. Are any of you married?

RUTH: I'm married to him (*Mike*) and she's married to him (*Bob and Kathy*).

BOB: Actually, we're getting a divorce.

RALPH: Oh, I'm very sorry.

BOB: (*very sincerely to RALPH*) No, please. It's just, I've been dying for a while, nothing serious, you know, but now I've decided I'm definitely dead, you see, so I'll have to change my name. It's a legal technicality. We'll marry again under my new name. Jobert. (*pause*) Job.

RALPH: Oh . . . well . . . that's certainly very unusual. Now this is going to get a little difficult, really. I've got to improvise some of these questions because the standard form is pretty rigid, like, you know, it asks things about your children's opinions and that would hardly apply in a case like . . .

MIKE: I have several kids by a former marriage.

RUTH: Hey, how come you never told me about that?

MIKE: If you remember dear, we did discuss it.

RALPH: Can I just edge in here, I mean, ha-ha I don't want to interrupt a little marital tiff or anything, but, ha-ha, you know. (*To NORMAN*) And how about you, sir, do you have any children?

NORMAN: I don't have any children. I'm not married.

RALPH: Well, sir, I would guess, am I right, I would guess that you are the oldest person staying here. I only mean that in the sense of responsibility. Am I right?

MIKE: The guy that actually lives here is older, but he's not here right now.

RALPH: No, he's lecturing, right? I remember, ha-ha. Now I'd just like to ask you the following question. Have you ever heard of a teaching programme called the World Volumes Encyclopedia?

DICK: Hey, are you selling encyclopedias?

RUTH: Hey, yeah, are you trying to sell us a set of encyclopedias?

RALPH: I'd like to make it very clear that I am not authorised to sell any product, I'm merely doing market research.

MIKE: Jesus Christ, he's not even selling the fucking things. You go and write to the central offices and you wait for a whole year to hear from them and when they finally decide to send a guy around he's not even authorised to sell you a set. I'm not hanging around here listening to a guy that isn't even authorised to sell the World Volumes Encyclopedia while millions of women and children are dying out there in Vietnam.

(*He grabs the banner and starts huzzahing as everyone follows him out of the door. DICK and NORMAN stay behind with RALPH, who is yelling after them.*)

RALPH: Hey, hey, listen, I can sell you a set if you want one.

(RALPH turns to DICK and NORMAN.)

Hey, do you guys really want to buy a set of encyclopedias? I can sell you a set. I got a number of deals and there's a special discount for government employees.

DICK: (*to NORMAN*) You going?

NORMAN: Yes, I've been reading a lot about it lately.

DICK: You want to come with me?

NORMAN: Well, yeah, if you don't have any other plans.

DICK: OK, hold on a minute.

(DICK goes out the hall door.)

RALPH: Hey, who are all you people?

NORMAN: We just live here.

RALPH: I go to college. I don't really come from Buffalo. I live in town. I'm trying to earn some money in my spare time. Are you guys really government employees?

NORMAN: I'm a graduate student.

RALPH: Yeah, well, I didn't want to say anything, but I didn't really think you guys were government employees. What are you studying?

NORMAN: Mathematics.

RALPH: I wanted to study Mathematics. My father said he wouldn't pay so I'm studying law. Boy, do I hate law. I'm living at home. Do you guys all live here together?

NORMAN: Yes.

RALPH: And . . . and the girls too?

NORMAN: Yes.

RALPH: Oh boy, what a life, huh? I'm gonna get me a car pretty soon. I'm saving up. The thing is, I'm not really doing too well selling encyclopedias. I can't pull it off. I wish I could figure out

why. I've been thinking about it and I think maybe it's because I can't give the sales pitch credibility. That's pretty bad if I'm gonna be a lawyer because a lot of the time you have to defend people you know are guilty. The thing is, these encyclopedias are really shitty. (*He blushes*) Sorry, I mean, you know, they're not very good.

(DICK re-enters. He is carefully groomed and well dressed in a pea-jacket and well laundered jeans. He wears a large, orange dayglo peace button.)

DICK: You ready?

RALPH: You going out?

DICK: Listen, if you're gonna eat anything, lay off the hamburgers OK?

(DICK and NORMAN start out.)

NORMAN: I don't see why he has to go saying he's dead. I mean that's only for him to have a physical. It's pretty easy to fail a physical. I've heard of guys that pretend . . .

(They are gone. RALPH, alone, looks at the open door.)

RALPH: Hey!

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

(A few hours later. KATHY is sitting in the kitchen crying. RUTH comes in the front door. She has just returned from the march.)

RUTH: Bob here?

KATHY: No.

RUTH: Hey, what's wrong. You want some coffee?

KATHY: Please.

(RUTH takes off her coat and starts making coffee.)

How was it?

RUTH: Weren't you there?

KATHY: No.

RUTH: I thought you and Bob were coming. You were on the bus and everything. I got lost when the cops charged. Boy, they really got some of those guys. Fucking pigs.

KATHY: When we got there he said he didn't feel like marching.

RUTH: Why not?

KATHY: Oh, Ruthie, I don't know. I don't know anything any more. You devote two years to a guy and what does he give you? He never even told me about that letter. Drafted, and he didn't even tell me.

RUTH: He's not drafted. That letter's for the physical. All he has to do is act queer. They're not gonna take a queer musician.

KATHY: That's what I told him on the bus. He wouldn't even listen until I called him Job.

RUTH: What?

KATHY: He said he was dead. 'Bob is Dead.'

RUTH: Bullshit, he's putting you on.

KATHY: That's what I mean. Me. He's even putting me on. Ungrateful bastard. The things I've done for him, Ruthie. Shit, I sound just like my mother. You know what I mean. I'm not complaining, but you know, you get tired of giving all the time and nothing's coming back. You know what I told him. I said he was the first guy I ever had an orgasm with. I mean, it really made him feel good. Now I gotta live with it. How can you explain something like that?

RUTH: Hey, no shitting around, did he really say he was gonna join?

KATHY: Ruthie, I'm telling you, he's serious. You know what he told me? He thinks the whole anti-war movement is a goddam farce. I mean, Jesus, I really thought we were relating on that one. It's not like I'm asking the guy to go burn himself or anything but, I mean, he knows how I feel about the war and he's just doing it to be shitty. There's something behind it, I know that. He's like reaching out, trying to relate to me on the personal level by rejecting me but, like, I don't know how to break through. He says he's gonna study engineering in the army and then when he gets out he's gonna get some kind of plastic job and marry a plastic wife and live in a plastic house in some fucking plastic suburb and have two point seven children. Oh shit, Ruth, it's all too much. He went to a cowboy film.

RUTH: Well, you know, that's how it is.

KATHY: But Ruth, it's not like a fantasy scene. I know the guy. He'll go through with it. I mean, he really thinks he's serious. He doesn't see it's all part of a communication thing between

him and me.

RUTH: I know. Like, maybe he's really serious. Mike's got his thing about physics. His tutor says he's a genius. OK, maybe he is, like what do I know about physics? The thing is he's gonna end up working for his old man in the lumber business. It's all laid out from the start. You have to fit in.

KATHY: You don't want him to do that, do you? If the guy is into physics you've gotta really stand behind him and make it all happen for him.

RUTH: I don't know. You have some kids and everything. I mean it's not like you can't have a meaningful life if you get married and have kids.

KATHY: Wow, I don't believe you really mean that.

RUTH: Look, Kathy, I don't want Mike to saw wood for the rest of his life, but what can I do about it. Why shouldn't he get into wood? Like, what if he does physics for the rest of his life and he's a genius and ends up head of department at some ass-hole university. You find out one day he's being financed by the CIA.

KATHY: These guys. They think they don't need you so you go away and they freak-out. Mike is a really brilliant guy. I mean we all know that. You could really do things for him if you tried. You should've seen Bob when I first met him.

RUTH: I did.

KATHY: He used to compose all this really shitty music and like when he did something good he didn't even know it. You had to keep telling him yes, it's good, it's really great. A whole year it took for him to believe it. He's writing some fantastic stuff now, ever since, you know, I told him he was the first guy.

RUTH: Yeah, and look at him now.

KATHY: (crying again) You think you're really relating like crazy and then, I don't know, it's a whole new scene. It's like you don't even know him any more.

RUTH: Maybe you ought to stop relating so hard.

KATHY: You don't know him, Ruth. I really know the guy and he needs me.

RUTH: Yeah, but maybe you ought to lay off for a while.

(MIKE bursts in through the front door.)

MIKE: Holy shit, where were you?

RUTH: I got lost and came home.

MIKE: Christ, it was horrible. We got stopped by this line of cops. Me and Cootie were right up front so I told him we should get everyone to join hands and stand still. We're standing there and this one pig starts running towards Cootie and you know how he gets when he sees pigs and he always gets diarrhoea. I don't know, he should have said something, but he got the urge so bad he started to run, you know, trying to find a toilet and this dumb pig thought he was trying to resist arrest.

KATHY: Is he all right?

MIKE: They took him to the hospital. He's, I don't know, they said he'll be all right. He got it in the back.

(COOTIE walks in.)

COOTIE: Boy, what a shitty march. You had to go and get separated with all the eats. I could've really used a marmalade and chunky peanut butter.

RUTH: Hey, did you know, Bob really wants to join the army. He's not even gonna try and get out. He didn't even go to the march.

COOTIE: He didn't miss much.

KATHY: He went to a goddam cowboy film.

COOTIE: Hey, is that the one with Kirk Douglas and Gina Lollobrigida and Kurt Jurgens and Orson Welles and Tom Courtenay and . . .

KATHY: You guys are really something. You don't give a shit what happens to him. I thought we were, like, all together here. Smug bastards. I'll tell you something.

COOTIE: What's that, Kathy.

KATHY: You're no better than the people fighting this war.

(KATHY storms out of the room down the hall.)

MIKE: She's pretty cut up, huh?

RUTH: She thinks he's serious.

MIKE: Isn't he?

(COOTIE starts jumping and singing, punctuating each note with a leap. He snarls the song.)

COOTIE: We shall overcu—u—um,

We shall overcu—u—um,

We shall overcome some day—ay—ay—ay—ay

Oh, oh, oh, deep in my heart.

I do believe.

We shall over . . .

MIKE: Shut up, Mel.

COOTIE: If Bob's really serious we gotta stop the war quick so he doesn't get sent over there to get killed by an anti-personnel bullet.

(DICK comes in, livid.)

DICK: Fucking Norman is fucking out of his fucking mind. That's the last time I ever take him with me.

(DICK takes a bottle of milk from the ice-box, kills it and places it on the stack.)

MIKE: Hey, what's the matter, Dick, didn't you get yourself some left-wing ass?

COOTIE: Don't be ashamed, sonny. If she's waiting out there in the hallway, bring her in and show us the goods.

DICK: Norman had a fucking gun with him. He took a fucking revolver to the march.

MIKE: Is he a good shot.

DICK: I'm not shitting around. We're sitting on the bus and he's telling me he's reading Ho Chi Min on guerilla war and he doesn't think marches are effective. So he says he's gonna use the marchers like an indigenous population and start a guerilla war against the cops. I mean, I thought he was just fucking around. You know Norman. Then he pulls out this fucking revolver right there on the bus, people looking and everything and he says he's gonna get a few cops and would I help him create a diversion. He's out of his fucking mind.

MIKE: How many'd he get.

DICK: Fuck you.

COOTIE: He got the girl, huh?

DICK: Where's Kathy and Bob?

RUTH: Bob's not here.

DICK: Kathy here?

RUTH: Leave her alone. She's upset.

COOTIE: Yeah, I wouldn't try to lay her just yet 'cause she's still going with Bob.

(DICK walks out down the hall.)

MIKE: That was a pretty stupid thing to say.

COOTIE: Just came out.

RUTH: Who cares. Everyone knows what dirty Dick's up to. Except maybe Bob.

MIKE: And maybe Kathy.

RUTH: Kathy knows.

COOTIE: Do you think a guy could become a homosexual just by willpower? Could someone learn to like guys.

(A knock on the front door.)

RUTH: It's open.

(In walks LUCKY, the downstairs neighbour led by MR WILLIS, the landlord.)

WILLIS: Lucky tells me there's been a lotta noise up here. Is that right?

MIKE: Sorry, Mr Willis, we had a little outburst up here. It's my fault. I just got a letter my sister had a baby.

COOTIE: We were celebrating.

WILLIS: That's all right, but keep it down. Lucky here was saying how you woke his wife up. She's a very ill person. I don't want any more complaints.

MIKE: Don't you worry about that, Mr Willis, I'll take it on myself to keep this place really quiet.

LUCKY: Listen, I told you kids once before, and I'm not telling you again. You gotta get rid of those galvanised aluminium garbage cans in the yard and get plastic ones like everyone else.

RUTH: Listen, I don't see why we can't keep the one's . . .

MIKE: Ruth, now calm down, Ruth. I'm sorry, Lucky, but Ruth's pretty upset. Her father's fallen ill and they don't know for sure if it's . . . you know.

LUCKY: You got the galvanised aluminium out there. You'll have to get rid of the galvanised aluminium ones and get plastic.

WILLIS: I'll take care of the rest, Lucky. Thank you for bringing this particular grievance to my attention.

LUCKY: I'll give you 'til Monday, then I want to see plastic out there.

(LUCKY leaves.)

WILLIS: Whew, I hope I seen the last of that loonie today. Nothin' but complaints day and night. The guy was born with a hair across his ass. So who's gonna give the landlord a little coffee?

(RUTH makes a move to get it.)

Thanks, sweetheart. Brother, what a day, what a stinker of a day. Where's Bobby?

MIKE: He's dead.

WILLIS: Dead? He's dead? You guys really kill me, you guys. You got a whole sense of humour like nothin' else. Dead, huh. Smart kid, Bobbie. Hey, you been to the march?

COOTIE: Yep.

WILLIS: Great march. I watched it on channel eight in colour. Brother, clothes you guys wear come out really good on colour TV. You know, that guy Lucky can be a lotta trouble. He got a mind, like, you know, the size of a pinhead, you know what I mean. Just one sugar, sweetheart.

MIKE: You want the rent?

WILLIS: Rent, schment. I come to see how you guys are getting along and you talk to me about rent. How many landlords care, tell me that? One in a million, I can tellya. Hey. You decided whatya gonna do when you get out of college.

COOTIE: I'm gonna be a homosexual.

WILLIS: A homo . . . You guys really slay me, you guys. What a sense of humour. You know, I'd give tena my other tenants for any one of you guys. You kids are the future of America, I mean that deeply, not too much milk, beautiful. Yeah, you kids live a great life up here. I got tenants complaining all the time about the way you kids carry on, and I'll tell you something, you wanna know why they complain? Cause they'd give the last piece of hair on their heads to live like you kids are living.

RUTH: How's Mrs Willis?

WILLIS: Huh? Oh, yeah, great, just great. Well, just between you and me and the wall she's gettin' to be a pain in the ass. She wants me to get rid of you too. Why? I ask her. She don't like the way you live. OK, I say, if you know so much, how do they live? She don't know and she don't wanna know. I try to tell her, you know, about the wild parties and stuff and taking drugs to have all new sensations in the body and the orgies with six or seven of you all at once. You should see her eyes light up. Same thing with all the tenants. When they hear what it's really like up here they go all funny. They'd pay me a hunnerd dollars to hear more but they ain't got the nerve to ask. Get rid of them. That's all I hear. Wammo to tell you something?

MIKE: If you got something to say you didn't ought to hold back.

WILLIS: Tremendous. You kids are tremendous. Listen. When the neighbours try to tellya about when they was young don't believe it. It's a lotta bull, and I should know. When we was young it was so boring you fell asleep when you was twenty and you never woke up again. You hear them stories Lucky tells about the war. Crap. He's sittin' down there holdin' his dink and watchin' Doris Day on television. He'd give his left nut to know what's happenin' up here. This is the best cup of coffee I've had all day. I got a theory about it. It's when the head and the stomach don't talk to each other no more. That's when everything goes to hell. I'm getting so I don't know what I want half the time. I got these dreams, really crazy dreams. I got this one where I'm in a clearing, you know, it's right in the middle of the jungle and there's this tribe of Africans, I mean, like I don't know if they're Africans but they're livin' in the jungle and they're black so I figure they must be Africans. They got this skin, it's you know, black, but really black. This maybe sounds kind of screwy but it's really beautiful, this skin. It's a dream, remember. I'm not sayin' black skin is beautiful, if you see what I mean. I'm in charge of the whole works in this jungle and I got it all organised so the men live in one hut and the women live in another hut and there's a big sort of square in between where nobody's allowed after lights out. They live like this all their life. There's no marrying or anything. I'm a kind of witch doctor and I got this tribe believing . . . well, you know, they're just, like, Africans, and they don't know you gotta have a man and a woman to make babies and I got 'em thinkin' you get babies when the moon shines down a girl's cunt and hits the inside of her womb. And I got this whole ceremony where a girl comes to me when she wants a baby and I tell her she gotta wait until it gets dark and the moon comes up. Then I tie her to a plank, face up and tilt the plank so her thing is facing the moon and then I go to the hut with the guys inside and get one of them to jerk-off on a leaf, you know, one of them tropical leafs that's really big. Then I roll this leaf up like it's a tube and I sneak across the square holding this leaf

in my hand all rolled up until I get to the girl. She's lying there in the moonlight all black and shiny and her thing is opened right up 'cause she thinks . . . and I got this tube full of jiz in my hand, and I'm coming closer so I can smell everything and . . . (Comes out of it) Jesus, what am I saying, I'm going crazy. It's just a dream what I'm telling you.

RUTH: That's the most beautiful thing I ever heard.

WILLIS: Listen, I got carried away. I didn't mean none of that.

MIKE: Mr Willis, if you'd've had the opportunities we've had you'd've probably ended up one of the great poets of the century, and I mean that includes Rimbaud, Rilke, Williams, Pasternak and Ginsberg.

COOTIE: And Whitman.

MIKE: Yes, Whitman included.

WILLIS: Oh Jesus, you kids, you kids. I feel like I can tell you anything. Somebody could've thought I was pretty screwy if I told them some of them things.

RUTH: How many landlords have poetry in their soul?

WILLIS: Yeah, yeah. Hey, I gotta run now. Listen, it's really great having you guys around. If I could get some of them other tenants to come up here and listen to you the world would be a better place to live in, you know what I mean?

MIKE: It would be a much better place.

COOTIE: A hundred percent better, at least.

RUTH: You're a beautiful person, Mr Willis. Never be ashamed of it.

WILLIS: No, I ain't. I ain't ashamed of myself. Hey, you know what I was sayin' before about all them complaints. I lost a lotta tenants on account of you. I can't afford any more, so keep it quiet or I'll have to get rid of you. Wonderful coffee, sweetheart. See ya.

(He leaves.)

RUTH: I wonder how long before they put him away.

(KATHY, clothes a bit messed up, flounces into the kitchen and gets a glass of water. DICK follows her as far as the kitchen, as if he was trying to stop her, but when he gets to the door frame he stops, feeling the tension in the room. He tries casually to button his shirt casually, not sure whether he wants the others to know what just happened between him and KATHY.)

COOTIE: Hi, Dick, how's it hanging?

(KATHY stiffens at the sink. DICK turns and goes down the hall out of sight.)

MIKE: I still can't figure out what to get good old Bob for Christmas.

(Before KATHY can reply, the doorbell rings. No one moves.)

COOTIE: Who's turn is it?

KATHY: You're a miserable bastard.

COOTIE: What'd I say? We're just playing a chess tournament

KATHY: Listen, this is my scene, mine. You guys stay out of it, okay Ruth!

RUTH: It's her scene, guys, you stay out of it.

COOTIE: Roger.

MIKE: Sam.

COOTIE: Larry.

MIKE: Richard.

COOTIE: What's Richard getting Bob for Christmas?

(The doorbell rings again, and MIKE jumps up to get it. SHELLY's standing there.)

MIKE: Hello there, I don't know you.

SHELLY: Hi. Does Norman live here?

MIKE: Does anyone here know a Norman?

SHELLY: He said he lived here. I met him at the march today. He said to come here and wait for him. I been standing out in the hall 'cause, like, I heard someone talking and I didn't want to disturb anyone and then this guy just came out so I figured, well, it's now or never kind of thing. I'm Shelly.

RUTH: Come on in. I'm Ruth.

SHELLY: Oh, good, then Norman does live here because I wasn't sure when he gave me the address. Sometimes you meet a guy at a march and he'll like give you an address and you end up waiting for a few days and he never shows. Did that ever happen to you? It's happened to me a lot of times.

KATHY: Listen, everyone, I'm serious, I don't want him to know. I'll tell him when the time's right.

RUTH: It's your scene.

(KATHY exits down hall.)

(SHELLY meanwhile goes under the table and sits.)

SHELLY: I'm sorry about this. If you want to laugh go ahead. I'm used to it. It's just I've got this thing at the moment where I keep sitting under tables and I figured I'd better do it right away instead of pretending for a while I didn't sit under tables. I mean, sitting under the table is 'me' at the moment, so why hide it. Have you ever done it?

RUTH: Want some coffee, Shelly?

SHELLY: I'm a vegetarian.

MIKE: Coffee's made from vegetables.

SHELLY: I don't drink coffee, thanks. I'll just wait for Norman.

COOTIE: Where's Norman?

SHELLY: Well, he was arrested for carrying a concealed weapon, but he said it's okay because he has a permit. He's really a total action freak, and he's very committed to the whole peace thing.

COOTIE: Oh.

MIKE: Well now.

COOTIE: How about that.

FADE OUT

END OF SCENE THREE

ACT II, SCENE FOUR

(NORMAN is trying to read. SHELLY is under the table blowing bubbles. MIKE and COOTIE are playing chess.)

MIKE: I still think you should've said something, Norman. I mean it's got nothing to do with putting you on. If Dick said we didn't have a cat, all right, I mean he's got a right to think that but, I mean, it's really irresponsible of him to go running all over the place saying we don't.

NORMAN: Well, you turned off the lights that time when you came in. I was trying to read.

MIKE: Yeah, but that was the nitty, gritty, no nonsense, down to earth needs of the moment because a cat just won't give birth with the lights on.

NORMAN: Dick says you don't have a cat.

MIKE: Will you listen to what I'm trying to tell you?

COOTIE: You can't move there.

MIKE: Why not?

COOTIE: Mate in thirty-four.

MIKE: Shit, I didn't see that. OK, your game.

(They start re-arranging the pieces.)

COOTIE: Yeah, you see, Dick gets these things and he'll tell you, like, we don't have a cat or something like that. We would've explained if you'd just come out and asked instead of getting all hostile and paranoid and thinking we were putting you on.

SHELLY: Wow, bubbles are really something else. I think they're maybe divine.

MIKE: Bubbles are divine, Shelly.

COOTIE: So's Bogart.

SHELLY: Oh, Bogart, wow.

COOTIE: You're pretty happy, aren't you, Shelly?

SHELLY: Oh . . . yeah. Like it's the right foods. And being under the table.

MIKE: You gotta watch the paranoid thing, Norman.

NORMAN: You were putting me on about the cat.

MIKE: See, you got this very paranoid thing about the cat.

NORMAN: I have not . . .

COOTIE: And the worst thing is how you get all defensive about it every time we bring it up. We're not denying your validity to doubt, Norman. We're not rejecting you as a human being. It's just you have a very paranoid personality because your father's a cop and that means you grew up in a very paranoid atmosphere.

SHELLY: Wow, your father's a cop?

NORMAN: Well, you know . . .

SHELLY: You never told me that. I think that's really great. My brother always wanted to be a cop.

COOTIE: My uncle's a cop.

MIKE: Yeah, that's right, our uncle's a cop.

NORMAN: That's what I mean, you see . . .

MIKE: What do you mean?

NORMAN: Well, I mean, you've got to go making fun of my father being a cop.

MIKE: Look Norman, it just so happens our uncle is a cop and why the hell should you be the only one around here with a cop in the family. You see, you got paranoid again, thinking we're

putting you on. I mean, we could do the same thing. How do we know your father's a cop. We don't. We trust you.

COOTIE: Yeah, and if you'd been outer-directed maybe you'd've seen you got a lot in common with us. A lot more than you ever expected.

MIKE: Then maybe we could've prevented that whole tragic episode with the gun.

NORMAN: Yeah, well, I don't know about you guys.

MIKE: You're not trying to say it wasn't a tragic episode.

COOTIE: It was an abortion of academic freedom, pure and simple.

MIKE: Here, here!

COOTIE: I mean, when they can kick mathematics graduate students out of school just for trying to murder a few cops . . . And, by the way, Norman, I've heard that your being kicked out of school was the doing of the Dean of Admissions, a man who is known far and wide to be cornholding his widowed sister in the eye-sockets regularly . . .

MIKE: And without love.

COOTIE: So put that in yer pipe and smoke it. And don't try to tell us you enjoy having to schlepp down to the Hays Bick every night to wash dishes for a dollar ten an hour.

NORMAN: Oh, I don't know.

SHELLY: Hey, are you guys brothers?

MIKE: Now there. Look at that, Norman. Shelly's wondering about the relationship between Mel and me and instead of being all paranoid about it and going crazy wondering she comes right out and asks.

SHELLY: Hey, are you?

COOTIE: Yeah, we're brothers.

SHELLY: Wow, I didn't know that either. I keep learning all these things about you guys.

MIKE: See, everything's cool now. Everybody trusts each other. That's what it's all about.

NORMAN: Well, I mean, with washing dishes I get more time to read. I've been thinking a lot and I guess it's like Dick said. I was pretty irrelevant before. Mathematics is pretty irrelevant no matter how you look at it, and bad mathematics is about as irrelevant as you can get.

SHELLY: I left school after the first month. I'm not saying I'm really relevant, yet, but like, some of my friends in school are really into bad scenes. School is evil. You can't find out where it's at when you're studying all the time to fit your head into exams. I'm getting to where I can read recipes all day and really get something out of it.

NORMAN: Yeah. I'm learning all this stuff about Vietnam. It's really something. I mean, I'm getting to the point where maybe I can do something really relevant about it.

MIKE: I wouldn't call that gun business relevant.

NORMAN: I was still in school when I thought of that.

SHELLY: Norman's got this fantastic idea.

NORMAN: Well, I haven't thought it all out yet . . .

SHELLY: No, Norman-baby, don't like close all up. It's the most relevant thing I ever heard of.

COOTIE: Jesus, Norman, how long have you been walking around with this idea all locked up inside you?

NORMAN: I didn't get it all at once. It sort of came in stages but I think it's about right.

COOTIE: Man, you're gonna go crazy if you keep everything inside like that.

SHELLY: Tell them the idea, Norman.

NORMAN: Well, you see . . . (Pause) I'm gonna set myself on fire as a protest against the war.

(COOTIE and MIKE look at him and exchange brief glances.)

I've thought about it a lot. I mean, I've read I guess about a hundred books about the war and the more you read the more you see it's no one thing you can put your finger on. It's right in the middle of the whole system, like Dick said. I shouldn't've tried to kill those policemen, but I didn't know then they were part of the system like everything else. No one's got the right to take anyone else's life, that's what I've decided. But I've still got the right to take my own life for something I believe in.

SHELLY: I'm gonna burn with Norman. We're gonna burn together. We've thought it all through and, like, if he burns himself alone that's just one person. Everyone'll say he's insane, but if two of us do it . . . wow. Two people. What are they gonna say if two of us do it?

MIKE: (pause) Three of us.

COOTIE: Fcur of us.

MIKE: You, too, huh?

COOTIE: It's the only way.

NORMAN: Hey, wait a minute. I've read a lot about the whole subject and I really know just why I'm gonna do it. I'm not just doing it for fun or anything. You can't just jump into it.

MIKE: Listen, Norman, you don't have to believe this if you don't want to, but it's the truth, on my honour. Me and Cootie talked about the same thing a year ago. We were all ready to burn ourselves . . .

COOTIE: It was more than a year ago.

MIKE: More than a year?

COOTIE: Almost a year and a half.

MIKE: That's right, a year and a half. Boy, time really goes quick.

COOTIE: It sure does.

MIKE: The thing is, we decided against it because we figured two isn't enough.

COOTIE: You know how the papers can lie. 'Brothers Burn.'

MIKE: Yeah, 'Hippie Brothers in Suicide Pact.' That kind of shit.

COOTIE: Think of it though. With four of us.

NORMAN: You really want to do it?

MIKE: It's the only way.

NORMAN: I mean, I wasn't sure yet. I hadn't made up my mind definitely. I was still looking for another way.

SHELLY: No, Norman-baby, it's the only relevant gesture. Like you said.

(Long pause.)

NORMAN: OK.

MIKE: After the Christmas vacation.

COOTIE: No, no, after graduation. We'll study like mad and get fantastic grades and graduate with honours so they can't say we were cracking up or anything.

MIKE: Yeah, we'll get Phi Beta Kappa. I'd like to see them say we're insane when two Phi Beta Kappas go up in flames with the son of a policeman and the daughter of a . . . Hey, what does your father do?

SHELLY: Well, it's kind of funny. I mean, he's a pretty weird head in his way. He's got, like, six or seven jobs at any one time.

MIKE: That's okay. Daughter of a weird head with six or seven jobs at any given time. That covers the whole spectrum.

NORMAN: What does your father do. I mean, I know your uncle's a policeman because I trust you, but you never said what your father did. I was curious. Like, if they bring our fathers into it what'll they say about you?

COOTIE: He's a trapper.

SHELLY: Wow, that's really something else. Like, a fur trapper?

COOTIE: Furs and hides, you know. Rabbit and mink and muskrat and beaver and elk and reindeer and seal. Some otter. Penguin.

SHELLY: Wow, penguin.

COOTIE: Well, you know, he works the Great Northwest Territory and up to the mouth of the St Lawrence seaway and over to the Aleutians.

SHELLY: Boy, this'll really blow everyone's mind.

MIKE: Yeah, this'll make everyone think twice, all right.

COOTIE: You know, we can't tell anyone about this. If word gets out they'll send squads of police around here and we'll get arrested and put under psychiatric observation and we'll get subjected to a battery of tests that make you look nuts no matter how you answer.

NORMAN: I won't say anything.

SHELLY: Oh, wow, like you don't even have to worry about me.

NORMAN: I didn't even know there were any trappers left.

(A knock on the door.)

MIKE: Come in.

VOICE: C'mon, c'mon, open up in there.

(MIKE opens the door and finds two cops standing there. BREAM is elderly and EFFING is young.)

BREAM: You live here?

MIKE: Yes, sir.

BREAM: Look, you know what I mean, you and who else.

MIKE: Well, there's me and my brother Cootie . . . um, Mel, and there's Norman, Dick, Bob, Kathy and Ruth.

BREAM: Kathy and Ruth, huh. Those are girl's names.

MIKE: Kathy and Ruth are both girls, sir.

BREAM: Don't block the doorway.

(MIKE stands aside as BREAM and EFFING enter. EFFING wanders around the room, inspecting.)

(indicating SHELLY) Which one's she. You Kathy or Ruth?

SHELLY: I'm Shelly.

BREAM: Shelly, huh. You didn't say nothin' about no Shelly.

MIKE: She doesn't live here, sir.

BREAM: Visiting?

SHELLY: I'm with Norman.

BREAM: You're Norman, huh?

NORMAN: She's my girlfriend.

BREAM: Good, we got that straight.

EFFING: Hey, Bream, this here's a map of Europe.

BREAM: Yeah. Now listen. There's been a complaint from the people across there. I know you kids are students and you probably think you own the goddam country, but I got some news for you. There's laws around here and you gotta obey them just like everyone else.

MIKE: We appreciate that, sir.

EFFING: Hey, Bream, look at all them milk bottles.

BREAM: Yeah. Now listen. I don't want to hear any more complaints about you guys. I'm a reasonable man which is something you can get verified by askin' anyone on the force, but when I gotta put up with a lotta stupid complaints I can cause trouble, and I mean real trouble with a capital T.

EFFING: Hey, look at all them dishes in the sink, Bream.

BREAM: Yeah.

NORMAN: What was the complaint?

BREAM: What do you mean, what was the complaint? The complaint was guys and girls parading around in here bare-ass. Now look, I'm not the kind of dumb cop that goes around throwing his weight everywhere to prove he's some kind of big shot. I don't need to, you follow me. I know what I know and I know what I don't know and one of the things I know I don't know is what the hell the kids are up to nowadays, but okay. That's my problem. If you wanna run around naked that's okay by me, and I hope you kids take note of the fact that I'm winking one eye when it comes to the law about co-habitation.

MIKE: We appreciate that fact, sir. It was the first thing we noticed.

COOTIE: I sure appreciate it. I think I can speak for Norman and Shelly and if any of the other guys were here they'd appreciate it a lot.

MIKE: I mean it's not as if we underestimate the life of a cop. For Chrissakes, I mean, our uncle's a cop. His father's a cop. A lot of us around here are pretty close to the world of cops.

BREAM: You got cops in the family?

EFFING: Hey, Bream, look at this heater.

BREAM: Yeah.

MIKE: It's not like we don't know what you guys have to put up with. It can be a pretty crappy job.

BREAM: I don't know . . .

MIKE: I'm not saying it doesn't have its rewards. My uncle's life is full of rewards. His father's life is very meaningful.

BREAM: Yeah, that's what I mean.

(COOTIE gets up and starts to leave the room.)

EFFING: Hey, Bream, the kid's leaving the room.

COOTIE: I got a call from nature.

BREAM: That's legit. You go ahead, kid.

(COOTIE goes out the front door.)

EFFING: Hey, Bream, the kid says he's going to the euphemism and what if he's got some stuff on him or something. He can flush it down and come back clean.

BREAM: He's okay.

EFFING: Jesus, Bream. Sir.

BREAM: The guy's new on the job. He don't know the score yet.

MIKE: You know how some people exaggerate. I mean, look what they say in the papers about you guys. Maybe, like after a shower we'll come in here to get an anchovy snack or chocolate milk or something, and we forget to put something on . . .

EFFING: Look at that, Bream, the girl keeps sitting under there . . .

BREAM: Goddamit, Effing, who's in charge around here?

EFFING: But she's sitting under there . . .

BREAM: Did we come here to investigate a complaint about a girl sitting under the table?

EFFING: No, sir, but . . .

BREAM: The girl happens to be well within her rights as a tax-paying citizen of the community to sit under any table she wants and until we get complaints about her sitting under there we leave her alone. Understand?

EFFING: Yeah, yeah, yeah . . .

SHELLY: Thanks.

BREAM: That's okay, lady. The kid's a rookie. They give us pros a bad name. Now let me tell you something about the people complaining about you. They look in here and see you guys bare-assed and they're complaining because they're so sick of looking at each other they gotta go spying on you. We know about them people. They're strict Roman Catholic. Twelve kids in four rooms. The old man can't keep it in his pants for ten minutes running. So they got troubles, right, and everyone that's got troubles wants to give troubles to someone else. So they make a complaint, and that's well within their rights as law abiding citizens of this community. I got enough troubles without their goddam complaints. I got enough to do watching the Vietnam freaks and the niggers and the loonies going up on buildings with high power rifles picking off everyone down below. Let me give you some good advice. Get curtains. They got some fibreglass curtains at Woolworths you can't tell them from real cotton. \$12.50 a pair and they come in eight colours, plain and patterned. You get some rods for \$1.69 a piece and for a total of \$28.38 you save yourself from a lot of crazy neighbours. If you can't afford \$28.38 get some gingham, 39c a yard at Pennys. Measure your windows and allow a foot extra at each end. All you gotta do is take up a three inch hem at each end, fold it over once and hand stitch. A couple of curtain rings and you're in business. Can you remember that or d'you want me to write it down.

SHELLY: Hey, yeah, would you do that?

(BREAM takes out a notebook and starts to write. EFFING is nervous.)

EFFING: The kid's been gone a long time.

BREAM: I got eyes, Effing.

EFFING: Yeah, yeah, yeah, OK.

BREAM: (writing) So, what are you kids gonna do with yourselves? (Pause) Am I being nosey or something?

MIKE: No, I mean, there's a lot of opportunities all over the place. We're not jumping into anything without we've looked the whole thing over.

BREAM: Smart kids. Boy, that's really something. Cop sending his kid to college. They must pay him pretty good, huh?

NORMAN: I guess so.

BREAM: Yeah, what's he, a sergeant . . . lieutenant or something.

NORMAN: He's Chief of Police for Buffalo County.

BREAM (whistles) Wew! Pretty good. That shut me up okay.

Chief of Police. Oh boy, that's really something.

NORMAN: It's just his job, you know.

BREAM: Look, ah, here's your instructions. I want them up by Wednesday. Any complaints after that and all of you guys'll be in court, father or no father, you understand me. This ain't Buffalo.

MIKE: Yes, sir.

NORMAN: OK.

(COOTIE returns and stands in the door. There's a pause.)

COOTIE: That's better.

END OF SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

(RUTH is scraping some cat food into a bowl. A cat comes in and eats. RUTH keeps glancing at her watch.)

RUTH: Kitty-kitty-kitty-kitty. Chomp, chomp. Good girl. Make a lot of milk for the kitties.

(KATHY comes in from the hall and throws herself down on a chair.)

KATHY: Oh, Jesus, Ruth, how am I ever gonna tell him?

RUTH: Who?

KATHY: Bob, for chrissakes. Who else.

RUTH: Well, how should I know.

KATHY: I never slept with Dick. I know you got the idea I did, but it's not true. He never got all the way.

RUTH: OK.

KATHY: Yet, I'm not saying I wouldn't like to.

RUTH: So go ahead.

KATHY: Well don't try to pretend it doesn't mean anything to you. You know as well as I do it'll kill Bob if he ever finds out

I'm even thinking of sleeping with Dick.

RUTH: That's how it goes.

KATHY: Ruthie, look, we've known each other since freshman year. I can tell when you're thinking something. This is really a big decision I've gotta make. What am I gonna do about Bob? I mean, it feels like maybe we're, you know, finished, but I like the guy. I really like him a lot and I respect his music. But I know he could never relate to me as a friend. It's gotta be tied up with sex. I mean, Richard really seems to dig me, but I don't know. He's pretty together. He's not the kind of guy you could really do something big for. Not like Bob.

RUTH: Oh, for shits sake Kathy, Dick is a fucking parasite.

KATHY: That's not fair, Ruth.

RUTH: Fair, shit. Do you know what that guy's doing to get into graduate school. You ever heard of Professor Roper in the Eastern Studies department.

KATHY: He's Dick's tutor.

RUTH: Yeah, and he also happens to be queer as a three dollar bill and Dick is fucking his wife to keep her quiet so good old Roper can suck cock with all those graduate students from Thailand or Malaya or whatever the hell they are.

KATHY: Who said.

RUTH: Who said? For chrissakes, Kathy, the whole goddam school knows about it. Dirty Dicky.

KATHY: That's why?

RUTH: Yeah, what else. I mean, the guy washes eight times a day.

KATHY: Oh, man, how long have you guys known about this. I mean, like why didn't anyone ever tell me. You can't just let him screw up his future like that. Hasn't anyone tried to do anything about it?

RUTH: Like tell him Mrs Roper's got clap?

KATHY: Ruthie, the guy must be really suffering.

RUTH: Oh shit, Kathy, let's not have the big saviour thing.

KATHY: That's not very funny.

RUTH: Look, we're all gonna graduate pretty soon, and we're all gonna go away and probably we'll never see each other again except maybe like at Christmas or something. So why don't you worry about yourself and never mind about Dick and Bob. They'll be OK.

KATHY: Boy, you sure have changed, Ruth. I don't know. You sure have changed.

(BOB comes through front door with books.)

BOB: I don't believe it. It's incredible. You know what happened today in counterpoint class? Remember I was telling you about Eric Shatz?

RUTH: . . . three armpits . . . ?

BOB: The very one.

KATHY: (nicely) Bob . . .

(BOB, who has gone to the ice-box to steal some of DICK's hamburgers, stops short in whatever gesture he is holding, only for a moment though, just long enough to cut KATHY. When he resumes his story, he is talking only to RUTH, who is wrapping a Christmas present.)

BOB: Today, Shatz turned in this perfect, spotless clean counterpoint exercise. I mean, for someone as filthy as Shatz, that's a miracle. They say his high-school year-book voted him 'The Most Likely to Attract Infectious Disease.'

(BOB has the hamburgers out by now. KATHY, being all nice, takes the hamburgers from him, indicating that she'll cook. BOB goes away from her and sits with RUTH.)

He picks his nose and squeezes his pimples right there in class, and his counterpoint exercises have to be seen to be believed. He writes them in pencil, and if he makes a mistake or something, he spits on his eraser and rubs the paper about a hundred times . . . per note, so by the time he hands it to Professor Bolin, it's just this gray sludge with lots of little black things swimming around on it. Anyway, about a week ago, when Shatz handed over his work, Professor Bolin put on a pair of gloves before he'd take it, so Shatz must've got the message and this week when Bolin called for homework, Shatz set this beautiful clean exercise down on the piano. We couldn't believe it. Bolin just sat there staring at it, and we all sat staring at Bolin and after about ten minutes, no shit, it took that long, Bolin turned to us and said 'Free will is an illusion.' Isn't that too much?

KATHY: Bob, can I talk to you . . . ?

(BOB ignores her.)

BOB: The thing is, Bolin's got a PhD. He's also written two books and a couple of hundred symphonies and string quartets and they say he taught himself twenty-two languages in four hours or something . . .

KATHY: Please, Bob, I want to talk to you . . .

BOB: And another thing, Bolin's wife got drunk at a faculty party for the music department last year and she yelled 'Fuck Shoenberg, I get it off with Miles Davis', and then she went and laid the only black professor in the school, which all goes to show that when Bolin tells you free will is an illusion . . . you better believe it.

KATHY: (*pointed*) Bob, I would like to talk to you . . .

BOB: Hey, Ruth, did I ever tell you the one about the guy that died and came back to life as Job?

KATHY: Oh don't start that shit again.

BOB: Again? It started over a month ago. I mean, even Bolin caught on after two lessons. Of course he still makes me walk around the music building every time I put down parallel fifths, but that's how it goes, life is trying at the best of times, every cloud has a silver lining, a stitch in time saves nine . . .

(RUTH looks at her watch.)

RUTH: I've gotta go.

BOB: Did I say something?

RUTH: No. Kathy wants to talk to you about sleeping with Dick.

KATHY: Ruth . . . bitch!

(RUTH goes out the front door, grabbing her coat on the way.)

BOB: (pause) Meanwhile, back at the ranch . . . You'll never believe this, but when I came in just now, I didn't expect that. Bedbugs, maybe. Thermonuclear war . . .

KATHY: She had no right.

BOB: I'm trying to think of something appropriate to say, like 'Name the first one after me.' That's Job. J-O-B. Job.

KATHY: Please, Bob, can I say something . . .

BOB: Do you have trouble pronouncing the name 'Job'?

KATHY: Jesus Christ, you're impossible.

BOB: Ah, yes, but I exist none the less.

KATHY: You've just cut me right out. You're not even trying to relate to me any more. (Pause) Well, you're not.

BOB: No, Kathy. The fact is, I like you a lot. I, um, sort of love you, if you know what I mean.

KATHY: I don't really want to sleep with Dick.

BOB: Then don't.

KATHY: It's just, he tried to get me that night after the demonstration.

BOB: I know. He told me.

KATHY: That shit.

BOB: I thought it was pretty good of him.

KATHY: He never got into me, you know.

BOB: That's nice.

KATHY: Oh, Bob, I'm sorry.

BOB: If Bob were around I'm sure he'd forgive you.

KATHY: What'll we do?

BOB: What do you mean? Like study or something?

KATHY: Bob, how does it stand. Is it . . . it's over, isn't it?

BOB: Between us, you mean?

KATHY: Yes.

BOB: If that's what you want.

KATHY: Of course I don't want it. I love you a lot.

BOB: OK, so let's study for Phil 720.

KATHY: Oh, for chrissakes show some emotion. I don't know where I'm at with you half the time.

BOB: Look, what's the big hang-up? If you want to stay with me, OK. If you want to move into Dick's room, go ahead. If you don't know for sure stay one night with me and one night with him 'til you start feeling a definite preference for one of us . . .

KATHY: Jesus Christ, Bob, what's the matter with you?

BOB: I'm Job. Bob's dead.

(KATHY flounces down the hall slamming the door behind her. She re-enters almost immediately to say . . .)

KATHY: If you want me, I'll be in Dick's room.

BOB: OK.

(She's gone. BOB goes to the stack of floor tiles, picks up a few. He looks at the unfinished floor. There's a knock on the front door. BOB stares ahead. Another knock. BOB speaks in a sort of trance.) Come in.

(Another knock. BOB comes out of it.)

The door's open. Come in.

(The door opens slowly. Standing there is this middle aged man. He's swaying a little and carries a bottle of rye whiskey. He is BOB's uncle, MURRY.)

MURRY: Can I come in?

BOB: Murry (*surprised, friendly*) what the hell are you doing here? MURRY: A guy travels a couple of hundred miles to see his nephew maybe he can come in, huh?

BOB: Yeah-yeah, come in. Come on, sit down.

MURRY: I bet you're surprised to see me. Maybe a little happy?

BOB: Well, yeah, I mean, I haven't seen you for a couple of thousand years or something.

MURRY: It's longer than that since you wrote. Hey, Bobbie-boy, Bobbie-boy.

(MURRY ruffles BOB's hair. This annoys BOB.)

You got long hair.

BOB: It keeps growing.

MURRY: Just like your mother, huh! Proud.

BOB: (*distant*) How long you in town for?

MURRY: Oh, you know, business. Hey, you want a drink.

BOB: No thanks. You go ahead.

(He gets MURRY a glass. MURRY is looking around.)

MURRY: You drink a lotta milk, huh?

BOB: Yeah.

(They look at each other and laugh.)

MURRY: Where did you find that goddamned ice-box?

BOB: You like it?

MURRY: Oh Jesus, Bobby, Bobby-boy, is this how you been living?

BOB: (*long pause*) Yeah.

MURRY: Why didn't you tell me. Write a letter, that's all. Say 'Murry, I need a little cash.' I would've sent you some money for a decent refrigerator.

BOB: Murry, I'm living OK.

MURRY: Just like your mother. She was always proud.

(MURRY drinks. BOB stiffens imperceptibly at the use of the past tense.)

Yeah, I came through New York.

BOB: (*guarded*) How's the kids?

MURRY: Huh? Oh, yeah. They're fine. Keep asking about you.

BOB: Auntie Stella?

MURRY: Oh, you know, she's fine. We got a new house.

BOB: Great.

MURRY: Yeah. You gotta come and visit us, huh. Don't worry about money. I give you the tickets you fly out and stay with us. The kids'd love to see you.

BOB: Yeah, yeah, great. You know, maybe this summer, you know, after I graduate

MURRY: I saw your mother in New York.

BOB: She OK?

MURRY: Yeah, yeah, sure. She'd maybe like a letter every now and then. Your own mother.

BOB: It's not like that, Murry. When I see her I see her.

MURRY: (*shivers*) Jesus Christ. (He drinks.)

BOB: You OK?

MURRY: Sit down, Bobbie-boy.

BOB: I'm OK like this.

MURRY: I got something to tell you you should maybe be sitting down when I tell you.

(BOB sits. MURRY pulls his chair close and takes BOB's head in his hands. BOB is stiff.)

Bobbie-boy, oh Bobbie. I'd like to see more of you, kid. Me and the family. You maybe come out and visit, huh?

BOB: (*flat*) What's happened, Murry.

MURRY: How am I supposed to tell you?

(The phone rings.)

BOB: Hang on a second.

(BOB answers phone.)

BOB: Hello? (Pause) No, he's not here. (Pause) No, he won't be back cause he's dead. (Pause) Don't worry, he didn't suffer, not much, anyway. (Pause) No, of course we don't want the phone disconnected, we're still living here. Hey, who is this, anyway? (Pause) Oh. (To MURRY) Telephone Company.

MURRY: Tell them to call back later.

BOB: (*into phone*) Yeah, listen, I'll call you back a . . . (Pause, to MURRY) They're getting the supervisor.

MURRY: God help me, of all times they should call you now.

BOB: (into phone) Yeah, hello . . . yeah . . . yeah . . . no, I mean, no, I explained all this to the operator. (Pause) Oh, well I didn't know it wasn't the operator. (Pause) Yeah, but look, how am I supposed to have known that it was a Controller Trainee just from the voice? You can't tell me Controller Trainees have special voices. (Pause) I'm not angry. (Pause) OK, go ahead. (Pause) Yes, I know that. (Pause) I said, 'I know that.' I know that you are the supervisor because the operator . . . no, wait a minute, what did you say she was . . . (Pause) the Controller Trainee, that's the one . . . (Pause) Look, willya be quiet for a minute and let me explain . . . (Pause) I'm not angry. (Pause) I'm not being rude. (Pause) I am not, I'm just trying to explain that when I spoke to the Controller Trainee, she ended by saying that the supervisor wanted to speak to me, and then you came on the phone, and that's how I know you're the supervisor, so when you said 'this is the supervisor speaking', you didn't have to because I already knew . . . never mind, forget it, what do you want?

MURRY: For God's sake tell her to call back later, Bobby. I gotta tell you something.

BOB: (into phone) Huh? No, I'm trying to listen to two things at once . . . I got my uncle here. (Pause, polite) No, I would say we make an average number of calls, but that's just a guess, because I don't know how many calls most people make. (Pause) Yeah, but it's not like any of us makes a lot of calls, it's just, I don't know, there's a lot of people living here and each of us makes an average number of calls so it adds up to a lot.

MURRY: Not now, Jesus Christ, Bobby, not now . . .

BOB: Look, Miss Supervisor . . . (Pause) Oh, sorry . . . Mrs Tomalson, I got my uncle here and he's trying to tell me . . . (BOB suddenly realises what he's saying, lowers the receiver and looks at MURRY. Then, to escape the moment, he takes the receiver back to his ear and, watching MURRY all the while, speaks to the voice at the other end.)

BOB: Hey, how do you guys know how many calls we're making? You got a special department down there to spy on us just so you can try to sell us another phone? Mrs Tomalson, I'm a taxpayer and I want to tell you that you have a fucking nerve . . .

(MURRY approaches BOB.)

(to MURRY) You wouldn't believe this woman, she's really twisted. (MURRY takes the receiver from BOB and sets it back on its cradle. They stare at each other. MURRY reaches up to touch BOB's face. BOB turns away.)

MURRY: . . . Bobby . . .

BOB: (pause, long) Cancer.

(MURRY nods. BOB doesn't see him.)

How long's she got?

MURRY: A week. Two weeks. I don't know. Any time now.

BOB: Those operations . . . kidney trouble. Oh, shit, why didn't someone tell me?

MURRY: You got your studies, we should worry you to death?

BOB: (flat) Fuck you all.

MURRY: I thought . . . I thought maybe you and me fly to New York tonight.

BOB: Yeah, get in there quick for the pay-off. That'll be just great.

MURRY: She don't know yet.

BOB: Yeah, 'Hi, Mom, I just came flying in with Murry a couple of weeks before Christmas vacation to see you for no good reason.' You think she won't guess.

MURRY: She doesn't have to. We can always tell her something.

BOB: You planning to keep it from her, too? I bet it's the first thing she thought of. Two years. She had that first operation two years ago. She's been dying for two years and I didn't even fucking know it.

MURRY: That's it, Bobby. (Pause) Life is full of shit.

BOB: (pause) I'll pack some stuff. No, you stay here. I want to be alone.

(BOB goes down the hall. MURRY sits. Very short pause, then MIKE and COOTIE burst in through the front door, laden with Christmas presents. They see MURRY, cross the kitchen to the hall door, exit and start arguing loudly just outside in the hallway. After a moment they re-enter, MIKE leading. Deferential.)

MIKE: Me and my friend were wondering if you could settle a little argument for us.

MURRY: What?

MIKE: Were you or weren't you the guy behind the bar in Key Largo, starring Humphrey Bogart and Edward G. Robinson?

MURRY: I'm Bob's uncle.

MIKE: (to COOTIE) He's Bob's uncle.

COOTIE: Are you a for-real uncle.

MURRY: (confused) Yeah, yeah, I'm his uncle.

COOTIE: Maternal or paternal.

MURRY: I'm related to Bob through his mother. She was . . . she's my sister.

MIKE: That means you and him have different names.

MURRY: Yeah, he's a Rettie, I'm a Golden.

MIKE: That's a pretty convincing story, mister.

COOTIE: Most of the pieces fit pretty good.

(MIKE and COOTIE start towards the hall. SHELLY comes in the front door.)

SHELLY: Hi, everyone.

MIKE: Hiya, Shelly.

COOTIE: Good old Shelly, hiya.

(MIKE and COOTIE are gone down the hall.)

SHELLY: Hey . . . Excuse me, do you know if Norman's here?

MURRY: I don't know who Norman is.

SHELLY: One of the guys here. I mean like he lives here. You someone's father?

MURRY: I'm Bob's uncle.

SHELLY: Bob? Oh, yeah, Job.

(SHELLY sits under the table.)

I'm waiting for Norman. Hey, are you, like, a for-real uncle?

MURRY: You kids keep asking that. (BOB comes back.)

SHELLY: You don't think of him with an uncle.

BOB: I'll be back in a few days.

SHELLY: Like, you mean, you're not just going home early for Christmas vacation.

BOB: No.

SHELLY: Oh. OK. Hey, Merry Christmas you, guys.

BOB: Merry Christmas.

MURRY: Merry Christmas.

(DICK comes in through the front door. BOB and MURRY start out. DICK is baffled.)

DICK: Hey, you going?

BOB: Yeah. Kathy's in your room. (pause) She doesn't like it from behind.

(BOB and MURRY are gone.)

DICK: Where's he going?

SHELLY: I don't know, but the guy with him is his for-real uncle and he's a weird head.

(KATHY comes into the kitchen.)

KATHY: Hey, did Bob just go out?

SHELLY: Wow, he didn't even tell you?

DICK: He left with his uncle.

KATHY: Uncle?

SHELLY: Yeah, like it's his for-real uncle, I'm pretty sure.

KATHY: Jesus, why didn't he say something. I mean, I been waiting for him down there . . .

SHELLY: Well, the uncle said Job went down to his room to pack, and, I mean, like if you were in there with him and he started putting a lot of socks and underwear and toilet stuff in a suitcase you should've got suspicious and asked him something, like where's he going.

KATHY: Look, I went to the bathroom, OK?

SHELLY: Ya didn't flush.

KATHY: Mind your own fucking business, Shelly. What does he expect me to do. How can I make plans for the Christmas vacation if he just . . . shit, he could've said something.

(DICK, in a feeble attempt to avoid KATHY's rage, tries to sneak out down the hallway.)

And listen you, you have a lot of nerve telling him about that night.

DICK: I didn't say anything.

KATHY: He said you told him.

DICK: Honest, Kathy, I never did.

KATHY: (vague) I'm really getting to hate this place.

(KATHY starts down the hall. DICK starts after her.)

DICK: Kathy!

(Before DICK can get down the hall, RUTH rushes in through the front door, breathless.)

RUTH: Oh, wow, have I ever had the most fantastic experience. (DICK goes down the hall, slamming the door. Yelling) You're a shit, Dick.

SHELLY: You seen Norman?

RUTH: Oh, hi Shelly. Hey, let me tell you about what just happened to me. It really blew my mind.

(From down the hall, we hear voices singing.)

MIKE & COOTIE (singing, offstage)

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS . . . AND . . .

(MIKE and COOTIE rush in from the hall dressed in Santa Claus costumes and end the song.)

. . . A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

MIKE: We got a present for you, Ruth.

SHELLY: Hey, where'd you get those?

COOTIE: We're doing collections this year. Yep.

MIKE: You want to see the great old present we got ya?

RUTH: I was just gonna tell Shelly what happened when I went to see Quinn. You know Quinn, the albino dwarf . . .

MIKE: Oh, yeah, old Quinn.

COOTIE: Good old Quinn.

RUTH: Yeah, right, well I had to see him about homework for the Christmas vacation and I mean, like, he was the last person I wanted to see. I always thought he was a vicious little bastard. I mean, he can be pretty shitty.

MIKE: They say he shot a man in Abeline.

COOTIE: In the back.

RUTH: Listen, willya. I went into his office and he's standing by the window, you know, three feet high and everything. I thought he was probably gonna ask why I wasn't doing any homework, and I had this whole speech worked out about how I thought he was a pretentious little snot and how I frankly didn't give a shit about philosophy and even less of a shit about him, if that's possible and . . . oh, you know, I was really going to kill him. Anyway, he told me to come over to the window, so I came over and we both stood there looking out. Snow everywhere, like, white wherever you looked and a lot of snow coming down like in those paperweights you shake up, and there's all these kids down below coming out of the building, all little lumps moving across the white in slow motion, and we're looking at them, just the two of us for, I don't know, about a minute or two and then he just turns to me, like without any warning, and says this incredibly beautiful thing . . .

MIKE: Hey, don't you want to see the nifty present we got ya?

RUTH: Let me tell you what the guy said, willya?

MIKE: Right, you tell us what Quinn said, then we'll show you the present.

RUTH: Yeah.

MIKE: Will you look at the present first then tell us what Quinn said?

RUTH: For Christ sake, stop fucking around and listen.

MIKE: All right, what did Quinn say?

COOTIE: Good old Quinn.

(As RUTH starts to speak, KATHY stomps into the room with a hastily packed suitcase and wearing an unbuttoned coat over whatever she was wearing just before. She doesn't look at the others. She just goes out the front door. A second later, DICK rushes into the kitchen, struggling into a jacket. He stops momentarily when he sees them all watching him. He says nothing. He goes out the front door after KATHY. The others all look at each other. After a longish pause, MIKE turns to RUTH.)

MIKE: You were saying about Quinn?

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE FIVE AND ACT TWO

ACT III, SCENE SIX

(Most of the posters are down. A bare feeling. Around graduation. There's some letters on the table. RUTH, alone, is reading her letter. DICK comes in from outside, dressed for warm weather, perhaps carrying a box. He opens the ice-box.)

DICK: Shit, nothing left.

RUTH: We cleaned it.

DICK: Anyone gone yet?

RUTH: No. Why don't you look at your grades.

DICK: (opens letter) Jesus.

RUTH: Bad?

DICK: Fucking awful.

RUTH: Do you graduate?

DICK: Yeah, just.

RUTH: They sent Kathy's grades here.

DICK: That was tactful.

RUTH: Maybe she'll be around to pick them up. I got into graduate school.

DICK: Great.

RUTH: Philosophy.

DICK: Philosophy?

RUTH: Yeah! (pause) I mean, you know, why not?

(DICK starts towards the hall.)

Hey, Dick, I don't get it. You know that day she left, just before Christmas . . . did you get into her?

DICK: How fucking low can you stoop, Ruth.

RUTH: No, I mean, you know, just, she must've done something to fuck you up this bad.

DICK: Kathy did not fuck me up.

RUTH: Yeah, well, ever since she left you've been looking like really terrible. You never even studied for finals. I mean, you were the academic head around here. Hey, you did get her, didn't you, and I bet she told you you were the first guy that ever turned her on.

(DICK starts out again.)

Did she? Oh, come off it, Dick, I just . . . I thought we were friends.

DICK: You know what that goddamn fucking little cunt told me just before she left? She told me I was screwing Roper's wife. Me, screwing Roper's wife.

RUTH: Well, you know Kathy.

DICK: She said everybody in whole fucking school knew about it. It got back to Roper.

RUTH: Wow, I bet he was pretty pissed off, huh?

DICK: He was pretty good about it, considering. He pulled me in after a tutorial and gave me the old 'Richard, my boy', speech. He thought I started the rumour. Me. Shit. 'Richard, my boy, it's said you're doing unenviable things to my wife. My boy, that particular assignment has already been well seen to. It's not like you to claim credit for someone else's work.' You ever tried to do a paper for someone who thinks you've been saying you're screwing his wife? Shit. Poor old fairy. Boy, what a fucking mess.

(BOB comes in the front door.)

RUTH: Hey, Bob, you got your grades.

BOB: Oh, yeah. (He looks.)

RUTH: How'd you do?

BOB: OK. This for Kathy?

RUTH: Yeah.

(BOB starts to open KATHY's letter.)

Hey, that's private property.

BOB: What the fuck's gotten into you all of a sudden. (Reads) A, A, A, A . . . B-. B- in Poetry 210. B-. Man, she really went to pieces without us. I hope she hasn't had a nervous breakdown or anything. Whew, B-.

(A knock on the door. DICK opens it. It's LUCKY.)

LUCKY: Listen: I just seen Mr Willis. He wants you out by tomorrow night.

BOB: How ya been, Lucky?

LUCKY: What? Oh, yeah. Well, if you want a hand, you know where to find me.

RUTH: Thanks a lot, buddy.

LUCKY: Don't get fresh, girlie. Don't give me lip. You can talk how you want when you're with your own, but you show a little respect when you're with Lucky. Smart Alecks. Think you know everything, but you don't. You don't know anything about living downstairs. I know what it's like. I live downstairs. Thinking you know everything.

DICK: Don't worry, we took care of it.

LUCKY: Huh?

DICK: We did like you said. Got rid of those plastic garbage cans and got some galvanised aluminium.

LUCKY: All right, that's what I mean. Now, if you want any help, I'll tell you what you do. You come downstairs. OK?

(As LUCKY goes. We see him look around and call Kitty-Kitty.)

RUTH: Guess I'll pack.

(RUTH gets up to leave. DICK starts taking down one of his posters.)

BOB: Where's everyone?

RUTH: Mike and Mel went out with Norman. They're meeting Shelly at the flicks. Casablanca. You should see the marks they got. They're both Magna cum.

DICK: Magna cum. Sneaky bastards.

RUTH: Yep. (She goes out down hall.)

DICK: You staying for graduation?

BOB: No, you?

DICK: (shakes head 'no') Hey, you really going into the army?

BOB: Yeah, as a hostage. I don't know. What are you doing?

DICK: Shit, I don't know.

BOB: Anything lined up for the summer?

DICK: Yeah, delivering milk. It's your friendly college graduate, Mrs Miller. 'Such a shame, the boy went to college'. Maybe I'll get sterilized, save any kids having to go through all this. She really was a bitch, you know.

BOB: I guess so.

DICK: Guess so, shit, I hope she gets cancer of the tits and suffers like crazy while she's dying. Honest to christ, she's the first person I ever met I could really kill.

BOB: Yeah.

DICK: Oh, great humility scene.

BOB: No, it's just, you know, that's how it goes.

DICK: You know something, Bob. You know what's wrong with you?

BOB: I been waiting all this time for someone to tell me. What's wrong with me, Dick?

DICK: You let her get your balls, Bob.

BOB: That was pretty careless, wasn't it?

DICK: No shit, Bob. I remember when you got stung by that bee in the Humanities quadrangle. I always wondered about that. I mean, you're supposed to yell when something like that happens. You don't stand there wondering if you should say something. You're really dead, you know.

BOB: Yeah, well, that's what I was trying to tell everyone right before Christmas, I thought I might just try it out, you know, being dead. Didn't feel any different.

DICK: I don't get it.

BOB: No, it's a pretty weird thing.

DICK: I gotta pack.

BOB: Yeah.

(DICK leaves the room. MIKE and COOTIE burst in through the front door panting heavily.)

MIKE: Oh shit, man, we've really had it. Christ, how could the guy do it? I thought he was kidding.

(RUTH comes in with a small suitcase.)

RUTH: Hey, you guys better hurry up and pack. We gotta be out of here tomorrow.

COOTIE: Ruth, sit down, huh. Something pretty bad just happened. Seriously, no shitting around.

RUTH: Where's Norman?

COOTIE: Norman's . . . he just . . . oh shit.

MIKE: He set himself on fire.

BOB: He what?

MIKE: All that stuff he was reading. He just . . . I don't know. He got this idea. Oh, fuck, how could the stupid bastard ever . . . shit.

RUTH: I thought you guys were going to see Casablanca.

MIKE: No, we had to tell you that. He had this plan. Honest to shit, we didn't know he was serious. Him and Shelly. We thought he'd just . . . we went to the common and he just took all his clothes off and poured gasoline all over him.

COOTIE: We were just shitting around, Ruth. Honest. If we thought he was serious we'd've stopped him, you know.

MIKE: It was that fucking Shelly.

RUTH: You fucking stupid . . .

MIKE: I'm telling you, it wasn't our fault. He wouldn't have lit the match. I know he poured the gasoline, but he'd never've lit the match.

BOB: He's . . .

MIKE: Oh shit, it was awful. He just sat there turning black. I didn't want to look, but I couldn't turn away. His skin just,

Christ, it just fell away from his face and his blood . . . (puts head in hand).

RUTH: Stupid fucking guys. You should've known. Where's Shelly?

COOTIE: She went crazy, Ruth. She just cracked up. We had to practically knock her out. She's okay now.

(SHELLY comes in the front door. Her eyes are closed and her fists clenched. RUTH runs to her, doesn't know what to do.)

RUTH: Shelly. Oh, Shelly, Jesus . . .

SHELLY: (teeth clinched) Fucking guys.

(NORMAN comes in. He's soaking wet and carries a gasoline can.)

MIKE and COOTIE rise.)

MIKE: See, everything's cool now. Everybody trusts each other. That's what it's all about.

(MIKE smiles oddly at the others.)

COOTIE: (registering it all) Holy shit!

(MIKE and COOTIE leave the room.)

SHELLY: (yells) Creeps. (To RUTH) You got any first-aid stuff?

RUTH: Yeah.

(RUTH gets a box from the pantry. It's a huge white box with a red cross on it, obviously stolen.)

BOB: Hey, what happened?

NORMAN: (sits) I'm all right.

SHELLY: Don't talk, Norman. Would you make him some coffee?

RUTH: Yeah. Those guys said you burned yourself.

NORMAN: No, I'm okay.

(RUTH makes coffee while SHELLY ties a bandage around NORMAN's wrist.)

SHELLY: Sorry if this hurts. Hey, Ruth, those guys are really bastards. They gotta learn you don't joke around sometimes.

BOB: Hey, were you really gonna burn yourself?

NORMAN: Well, you know . . .

SHELLY: We were all supposed to do it. All four of us. We waited all this time for them to graduate with good grades and everything. Six months almost. I mean, like, the war could've ended. Fucking creeps. They went and put water in the gasoline can.

NORMAN: I think I might be getting a cold.

SHELLY: We're making coffee, Norman. Keep cool.

BOB: Hey, were you really serious?

NORMAN: Well, I thought, you know, with the war and every thing.

SHELLY: Water, shit.

NORMAN: Well, there was some gas in that can.

SHELLY: Fucking creeps.

NORMAN: I definitely smelled some gas when I poured it over me.

SHELLY: Hold still, Norman.

NORMAN: I mean, I knew there was something wrong when I kept holding the match to my wrist and nothing happened.

SHELLY: What do you mean, nothing happened. What's wrong with you, Norman. You call that burn on your wrist nothing? It's the worst burn I ever saw. We're lucky we didn't get arrested.

NORMAN: I've seen movies of the Buddhist monks setting themselves on fire. They usually go up pretty quick in the movies. I bet it hurts a lot. My wrist really hurts.

(RUTH brings NORMAN some coffee.)

RUTH: Listen, we have to be out of here by tomorrow.

NORMAN: All right.

RUTH: Well, what are you gonna do?

NORMAN: I haven't thought about it too much. I thought I was going to be dead by now. I hadn't planned beyond that.

RUTH: You got a place to stay?

SHELLY: He'll stay with me.

NORMAN: Yeah, okay.

RUTH: We'll have to have a big clean up in case Willis comes around.

NORMAN: I was thinking maybe I'll try to get back into graduate school. I'm getting sick of washing dishes.

(BOB has been taking down his map of Europe from the wall.)

BOB: I think I'll go to Europe.

NORMAN: I'm not really angry at Mel and Mike. In a way I'm kind of glad I'm not dead.

SHELLY: I think those two guys are really evil.

(RUTH goes down the hall.)

BOB: You ever been to France?

SHELLY: I went last summer.

BOB: What's it like?

SHELLY: Shitty. They're really up tight in France. I got busted in Calais. Two weeks in prison with the runs. That's no joke.

BOB: Maybe England.

NORMAN: I was in England once.

BOB: What's it like?

NORMAN: I went on a bicycle trip with the Youth Hostel Organisation. My father sent me.

BOB: How was it?

NORMAN: It was okay.

SHELLY: England's a lousy place.

NORMAN: I don't know. I met some nice people. I saw Buckingham Palace. The food's not very good but it didn't rain much. I guess it was a pretty valuable experience. I remember thinking at the time my horizons were a lot wider after that trip. I don't remember why I thought that. Maybe I'll go back there one day.

BOB: Oh well, there's always Italy or Greece.

SHELLY: If you go over there, check out Algeria. Algeria's really something else.

(MR WILLIS opens the door.)

WILLIS: OK if I step in? Hey, what have you done to your hand?

NORMAN: It's just a burn.

WILLIS: Too bad, huh? Look, how's about if I see everyone for a minute. Everybody here?

BOB: (yelling) DICK, RUTH, MIKE, COOTIE, C'MERE A MINUTE. MR WILLIS WANTS US.

WILLIS: Hey, hey, hey, you don't have to do that. You don't have to yell on account of me.

(All come in.)

Hi, how's everybody? Gettin' ready for the big day? You gonna wear them long robes and everything, hey? All that fancy ceremony. Pretty good, huh? Listen, I just wanna give the place a quick once over because I'll tell you why. I got this tenant moving in pretty soon so I gotta be sure everything's okay. Get rid of them milk bottles, that's the first thing, and I'll pick up the rent for this month, okay? How 'bout this floor, huh? You gonna finish it? Hey, I asked a question, who's supposed to be doing this floor?

BOB: I am, Mr Willis.

WILLIS: So how come you leave it half finished?

BOB: Sorry, I never got the time.

WILLIS: Well you get it. I give you good money for them tiles, put me back a hunnerd bucks. How many landlords you find'll do that?

BOB: Yeah, okay.

WILLIS: By tomorrow night, understand. Now, let's have a little look round.

(WILLIS goes down the hall followed by BOB, RUTH, COOTIE and MIKE.)

NORMAN: Mike.

(MIKE turns.)

Listen, I just want to tell you, I'm not angry about what happened.

MIKE: What do you mean?

SHELLY: You're a real creep pulling a trick like that.

MIKE: That's what I get for saving his life?

SHELLY: It's none of your business. It's the existential right of every living person to take his own life.

MIKE: No one's stopping you now.

NORMAN: What I wanted to say is if you and Mel are coming back next year to go to graduate school, maybe we can share a place. I mean, you know, I could come down here early and look around.

MIKE: You going home for the summer?

SHELLY: He's staying with me.

NORMAN: Yeah, well I might go home for a few weeks. Visit my folks. The best way is you write to my father, care of the Police Department, Buffalo County, and if I'm not at home he'll know where to forward it.

MIKE: Police Department, Buffalo County.

NORMAN: Yeah, or you can put Commissioner of Police, Buffalo County. It'll reach him either way. Just put, 'forward to Norman'.

MIKE: Right. Me and Cootie'll be up in the great Northwest Territory helping dad with the furs. If you don't hear from us just go ahead and find a place for all of us 'cause sometimes the mail gets delayed.

NORMAN: Don't worry, I'll get a place.

MIKE: Commissioner of Police, Buffalo County.

NORMAN: That's right.

(MIKE smiles at him, not without warmth. In come COOTIE, RUTH, BOB, DICK and MR WILLIS.)

WILLIS: Not bad. I'll tell ya what I'll do. I'll keep the fifty dollar deposit for holes in the plaster and the broken window.

COOTIE: Hey, we didn't break that window. That was broken when we moved in.

WILLIS: That's not my problem, Cootie. I keep the fifty and if any of you guys got an objection you want to take it up with me let's have it. Look, I got a living to make like everybody else in town. Maybe you think I'm being a rotten guy, but you wait. You go out there in the world and you're gonna see things you'll think old Willis was Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs all rolled into one. You're gonna see dishonesty, you're gonna see mean people, you see swindlers, killers, queers, you see guys trying to double park on Saturday morning, you take my word. The thing I love about you kids is you're honest, you're direct. There's no shitting around with you. Yeah, I know it sounds corny, but I'm gonna miss having you guys around. You gotta save this poor fuckin' country and excuse my language. There was a time, I can remember, when you paid your taxes and you knew your money was goin' into the right things. Good, wholesome things. Look at it nowadays. Two blocks away there's a house full of guys known all over the neighbourhood to practise open homosexuality. Open homosexuality two blocks away and there's kids playing right outside that house every day. I don't know. I'd go jump in the lake if it wasn't for you kids. I never knew anyone like you, and I been around, let me tell ya. You know where you are, you know where you're going and you know how to get there. That's never happened before in the history of this whole fucking country. God bless you kids, and good luck. I'll take a check for the rent.

COOTIE: (sings) For he's a jolly good fellow,

OTHERS: (joining in) For he's a jolly good fellow,

For he's a jolly good fellow,

That nobody can deny.

That nobody can deny.

That nobody can deny.

(Etc., all the way through. WILLIS beams, entirely unaware of the spoof.)

END OF SCENE SIX

SCENE SEVEN

(The next afternoon. The kitchen is bare of furniture. Ice-box is gone, only a few milk bottles left. Only one chair left. BOB is laying the vinyl tiles.)

(COOTIE comes into the room with his FATHER. He grabs the last valise by the front door.)

COOTIE: Hey, Bob, I'm going.

BOB: Yeah, we'll see you.

COOTIE: Yeah.

(MIKE comes into the kitchen from the hall door.)

MIKE: You going?

COOTIE: Yeah. Oh, this is my father. That's Mike, that's Bob.

BOB: Hi.

MIKE: Hi.

FATHER: A pleasure.

MIKE: What?

FATHER: It's a pleasure meeting you.

MIKE: Oh yeah, right.

COOTIE: Well, see you guys. Hey, what you doing next year?

BOB: Oh, I got a job in a department store.

COOTIE: Playing piano?

BOB: Harp.

COOTIE: Great. Well, see ya.

BOB: See ya.

MIKE: Yeah, see ya, Cootie.

FATHER: Nice meeting you boys.

(COOTIE leaves with his FATHER.)

MIKE: They don't look like each other. Good old Cootie. Where's Norman?

BOB: He left about an hour ago.

MIKE: Never said good-bye or anything.

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BOB: You should've seen it, putting all his stuff in the back of a police car.

MIKE: What?

BOB: Yeah, his old man's Commissioner of Police, or something.

MIKE: I'll be fucked.

(RUTH comes in from the hall with two suitcases and sets them down by some other suitcases near the door.)

RUTH: I guess that's it. Where's Cootie?

MIKE: He just left with his dad.

RUTH: Some friend. No good-bye or anything.

MIKE: We'll see him next year.

RUTH: No we won't.

(MIKE and RUTH go down the hall for their last luggage. DICK and the MILKMAN enter through the front door with empty cartons. They load the remaining bottles.)

DICK: Hey, I wouldn't mind a little help, here. I gotta catch a train.

MILKMAN: I don't understand you guys. You're supposed to be college graduates. Eight hundred and fifty seven two quart milk bottles. That's not the kind of thing a grown up person does. You're supposed to be grown ups. I don't get it.

(The phone is ringing.)

DICK: That's the last one.

MILKMAN: OK. I just hope you guys don't think you can go through life hoarding milk bottles like this. I got enough to do without this. I got a regular route. (To DICK) Look, if you want to pick up a lot of bottles, put your fingers right down inside, you get more that way.

DICK: OK. Hey, you guys, you're a lot of help.

(MILKMAN and DICK go out with their cartons.)

BOB: (answering phone) Hello, oh yes, how are you. No, this is Bob. Bob Rettie. No, music. Yes, of course I remember you. No, he's not in right now.

(MIKE and RUTH re-enter and motion BOB that they have to go. He motions back that it's okay. He waves good-bye as they pick up their suitcases and leave.)

RUTH: Hey, good luck.

BOB: Yeah, yeah, you too. See ya, Mike.

MIKE: See ya.

(RUTH and MIKE exit.)

BOB: (back on phone) Sorry, Mrs Roper, I was just saying goodbye to some people I . . . some friends of mine. I don't know if he'll be back or not. Can I leave a message?—Look, Mrs Roper, I'm very sorry about that but there's nothing I can do if he's gone. I can tell him to call you if he comes back. Mrs Roper look, calm down. Listen, I'm hanging up now, all right? I gotta hang up now. Goodbye, Mrs Roper.

(BOB hangs up and returns to the floor tiles. DICK comes in alone.)

DICK: Boy, that guy was sure pissed off about the bottles. You should've seen the look on his face.

BOB: Hey, you know that guy you studied with, Professor Roper?

DICK: (pause) Yes.

BOB: His wife just called.

DICK: What'd she want?

BOB: She just . . . I don't know. Nothing, I guess. Pretty weird.

DICK: Yeah, pretty weird.

(DICK puts on his coat and takes up his bags.)

BOB: Hey, Dick.

DICK: What?

(They look at each other.)

BOB: I don't know. See ya.

DICK: Yeah.

(As DICK is leaving he passes a PLUMBER.)

PLUMBER: Sorry.

(DICK is gone. The PLUMBER is inside.)

Oh brother. (Examines the stack heater) One of them jobs. Living, breathing, walking, talking suicide, that's what these things are. Nothing less. Boy, I haven't seen one of these things for ten years. You live here?

BOB: Yeah, sort of. I'm leaving as soon as I finish with the floor.

PLUMBER: You're lucky you're still alive with this goddamn thing. They can blow up like nobody's business. You light it with a match, am I right?

BOB: You're right.

PLUMBER: You bet I'm right. A stack heater, that's what it is, otherwise known in the trade as the suicide special number three.

You forgot to turn one of these things off and you wake up without a head. They got no thermostat. Nothing to shut it off when it gets too hot. Just keeps heating and heating. No wonder the guy wants a new heater.

BOB: No shit, it could really explode?

PLUMBER: Could, nothing. We used to get ten deaths a year from these things going up. Oh yeah, they say there's supposed to be a safety device up there in case it overheats, but who says the safety device is gonna work? See that doo-hickey up there on top. That's what's supposed to save your life. Let's have a chair. (BOB gives him the one remaining chair which the PLUMBER stands on.)

See this copper tube? The idea's supposed to be that when the pressure gets too high there's a little bladder inside that ruptures, see, and the pressure comes shooting through this copper tube into the sink. That's why it goes into the sink. But what if the bladder don't rupture, that's what I'm asking. The water just keeps getting hotter and hotter by the motion of agitated electrons skipping around from orbit to orbit and bouncing into each other. I'm just quoting from a chemistry book I read, I don't know if it's true or what, could be a lot of bunk. What I'm saying is the pressure gets too high, these here copper tanks can't hold it in no more and then look out. How long's this flame been on?

BOB: I don't know. An hour or two.

PLUMBER: Lemme show you something. There's a little trip switch you can set it off manually. You just bend the cotter pin straight and pull it out. Gotta keep your face out of the way in case of bad fitting . . . watch . . .

(As he says this he pulls the cotter pin and a huge jet of steam comes billowing out of the copper tube and into the sink. The steam keeps coming and coming for ages as both stare at it. While this is happening, KATHY appears at the open door to the kitchen and stands looking in. BOB only becomes aware of her just before the PLUMBER begins speaking again.)

That's what's inside there. Right, gotta get me some tools up here. If my partner turns up while I'm gone, do me a favour, willya, and tell him I gone round the corner to get me a number eight pipe wrench from the pickup truck. Can you remember that?

BOB: Yeah, sure.

PLUMBER: (leaving) Number eight pipe wrench. Tool of the trade. (Sees KATHY) Hiya, beautiful.

(He passes by KATHY on the way out and pats her cheek. KATHY comes in and walks around the kitchen.)

KATHY: Everyone gone?

BOB: Yeah.

KATHY: Finishing the floor?

BOB: Evidently.

KATHY: Kind of late, isn't it? (Pause) Did they send my grades here?

BOB: On the window sill. You did really shitty.

KATHY: (gets the letter) Bob, listen . . . I'm sorry about . . . sounds pretty silly.

BOB: No, I accept your apology for whatever you think you did.

KATHY: I saw Ruth the other day. She said you've been . . . well, pretty bad this semester.

BOB: Did she say that?

KATHY: I wish I'd known . . . couldn't you have . . . you should have told me to stay.

BOB: Well, it slipped my mind. Sorry.

KATHY: You shouldn't be so ashamed for your feelings.

BOB: OK.

KATHY: I'm serious. You've gotta learn to let go. Like with your music. It's all squunched and tidy.

BOB: OK. I'll work on that.

KATHY: Oh, Bob.

BOB: What?

KATHY: I really wish you'd've told me. I'd've come back. I never really related to Richard.

BOB: I'll tell him when I see him.

KATHY: Yeah, you're right. Why the hell should you be nice. Oh well, good luck . . . and, you know, when you see your mother say hello for me.

BOB: OK.

KATHY: How is she?

BOB: She's okay. Sort of dead.

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KATHY: I like her, Bob. You're lucky. She's, you know, she's a real person.

BOB: No, she's, you know, a real corpse.

KATHY: All right, have it your way.

BOB: No, it's not what I wanted particularly. No, taken all in all, from various different angles, I'd've preferred it if she lived. I'm pretty sure of that.

KATHY: (pause) She's not really.

BOB: School's over.

KATHY: Bob, do you know what you're saying?

BOB: Kathy, please get the fuck out of here.

KATHY: But, I mean, Ruth never told me . . . Didn't you tell anyone?

BOB: Yeah, I just told you.

KATHY: But, I mean . . . when . . . when did . . .

BOB: Christmas. No, no, it was the day after.

(KATHY sits.)

KATHY: Jesus, Bob, why didn't you tell anyone? I mean, how could you live for six months without telling someone?

BOB: (with no emotion) Oh, I don't know. A little perseverance. A little cunning. A little fortitude. (Long pause) They put her in this room, I don't know what you call it. They bring everyone there just before they kick the bucket. They just sort of lie around looking at each other, wondering what they got in common to talk about. I saw her for fifteen days running. She knew. I'm sure of that. I couldn't believe it. Not the last time anyway. I couldn't believe that thing in bed was alive. It was just a yellow thing. No eyes. Anyway, they drugged her up so heavily she couldn't see anything. I think she was trying to say something. I'm not sure. Lying there, messing herself, rotting. There was this stuff on her teeth. Looked like scab. Dry, greeny stuff in a sort of web. I thought she was trying to tell me something. I bent over to listen and caught a whiff of that breath, like fried vomit. I was

sick on her. (Pause) Thank Christ she died. On the other hand, the funeral was quite a successful affair. I didn't know she had so many friends. It turned out the chaplain knew some of my uncle's relatives so we had a nice talk and he told some rotten jokes and everyone laughed. I never got to the graveyard. The car I was in broke down on the Merrit Parkway. Just as well. I didn't feel like seeing all those people again. All those . . . I never knew she had so many friends.

KATHY: Bob . . .

BOB: Anyway, I, um, I didn't feel like talking about it. I mean, I wasn't all that upset. I was a little upset, mostly because I thought I ought to be more upset, but as for your actual grief, well . . .

(KATHY has risen.)

Going?

(KATHY starts out the door.)

Give my regards to that guy you're rescuing at the moment. What's his name.

(KATHY is gone. BOB shrugs. He sits. The cat comes in.)

Hey, cat, what the fuck do you think you're doing hanging around here. All the human being's are heading west. Everyone done gone, puss-puss.

(BOB picks up the cat and sets it outside, closing the door. He returns to his tiling. Stops and looks around. Goes to the hall door and looks down for a while, then turns back to the kitchen.)

OK. Announcement. This really incredible thing happened to me. Hey, everyone, let me tell you about this really incredible thing that happened to me . . .

(His body is doing something he doesn't want it to.)

Oh fuck, come on. Shit, no, no . . .

(But he is. He's crying, first with just his face, then with his whole body. His mother's death has nothing to do with it.)

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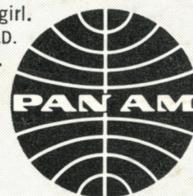
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